

REFLECTIONS



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Cover: Master Architecture Thesis Project "Architecture of Liberative Movement"
by Benjamin Nesbeitt. Henry Plummer, thesis critic. See page 36.

Architecture Between Tradition and Progress

Andrzej Pinno
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The paper discusses the present debate between modern and postmodern architecture in terms of a conflict ingrained in human nature: a conflict between structure and evolution, tradition and progress. It tries to show the inevitability and indispensability of such a conflict for architecture and, at the same time, its apparent futility. It gives a brief overview of some ideological battles for and against progress fought since the Industrial Revolution, presents examples of their interweaving through history and how, for better or worse, they have influenced the evolution of architecture. It sees the present architectural struggles blurred by the plurality of various trends, lost in esoteric philosophical and aesthetic concerns, and mostly directionless. It links the causes of this malaise to the impasse of the once progressive tradition of Enlightenment and suggests that the emerging Ecological Revolution may, as the Industrial Revolution before, change the hierarchy of values and, in this way, refocus and redress the never ending conflict between the old and the new in architecture.

Modern science and technology progress with frightening speed. New achievements in biology or medicine, physics or information multiply ever faster, and together with global economy, intercontinental communication, or supersonic travel open new possibilities for man. At the same time, however, the very achievements of Western Civilization destroy traditional structures of societies. Ethics is helpless in the face of the alleged objectivity of science; families disintegrate, and the individual is lost in the ambiguity of moral precepts. Knowledge is replaced by information, books by TV, dignity by success. Examples like these abound and force us to ask whether progress can be stopped and whether tradition can be disregarded.

In such a schizophrenic society, various fields of human endeavor try to define their character anew. Architecture, too, seeks a relevant role for itself and in this process oscillates among diverse trends. Some idolize high technology, others indulge in historical forms and popular culture, and still others agonize over the ambiguities of language. The progressive architects believe that it is the future, especially the technoscientific future, that can offer what the present is unable to deliver; the conservatives believe that a return to the past can give us back the lost values; while a third group shows indifference toward the outside world and concentrates on the internal order of architecture, on architecture for its own

sake. Among the progressives and the conservatives, as Aldo van Eyck suggests, the technocrats sentimentalize about the future, and the antiquarians sentimentalize about the past. But our attitude toward the future and toward the past is more than a question of sentiment: it is a conflict deeply ingrained in human character. Although we live in the present we plan for the future and remember the past. We cannot ignore either, and, thus, are condemned to a life between these two poles. Can we, however, find a balance between the future and the past, between progress and tradition? Can we rationalize this situation?

To answer this question we must turn to history which, in spite of our present irreverence for its truths, can still offer us some insights and teach us, for example, that the battle between the old and the new is old itself.

Toward the end of the 17th century a famous quarrel between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns" took place in France. The *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, as it was called, pitched against each other two types

of thinking, two ways of looking at the world. The moderns believed in the logic of rational thinking, in the power of science: in progress. Their adversaries, the ancients, sought knowledge among the authorities of antiquity and history. The progressives heralded the rise of the Enlightenment and, thus, built the foundations of modern, rational civilization. The conservatives believed that Plato and Aristotle had more to offer than the assertions of science and, thus, defended wisdom and tradition against an uncritical science. Today this quarrel seems to be losing direction. Rationalism, the tradition of Enlightenment, and scientific thinking are under attack and there is nothing available to replace them. The so-called pluralism of ideas and opinions reflects the existing situation in which nothing is clear, univocal, or decided. Western Civilization, threatened by its own successes—the ecological crisis or the nuclear threat for example—tries to reevaluate its very foundation and wonders whether progress promises a paradise on earth, or leads to ruin; whether tradition is a panacea for today's ills, or an escape from the uncertainties of the new.

John Ruskin, "Ruskin Windore," Oxford Museum



Conflict between these two approaches in architecture has a long history. Ruskin and Paxton, Sitte and Sant'Elia, Asplund and Le Corbusier, Van Eyck and Woods, Venturi and Eisenman are some of the architects who have represented these opposite positions and whose role in this conflict is still being disputed. But the debate is not over. It will go on from generation to generation for, as Leszek Kolakowski says in *Modernity on Endless Trial*:

The clash between the ancient and the modern is probably everlasting and we will never get rid of it, as it expresses the natural tension between structure and evolution, and this tension seems to be biologically rooted; it is, we may believe, an essential characteristic of life. It is obviously necessary for any society to experience the forces both of conservation and of change.¹

The Industrial Revolution caused such a clash through unprecedented changes which it introduced in almost all domains of social and individual life. The speed of their succession was of such a magnitude that the society of those days could hardly comprehend their meaning and significance. The new civilization suddenly faced new problems which required and generated new ideas and solutions. Some of them were utopian, others remedial; some promoted revolutionary thinking, others introduced piecemeal reforms. Saint Simon, Fourier, Owen, and later, Godin—the utopian socialists—belonged to the first group. Being great critics of their civilization, they were aware that the old cities, its centers, were unfit for the new industrial society. They were convinced that these cities, often of medieval origin, could not serve well the new society, and concluded that new communities should be established. In this spirit they introduced

not only new solutions in architecture, but also suggested new ways of thinking.² Their social consciousness and sensitivity to social injustices lead them to believe that the character of man was shaped by the human environment. Consequently, they directed their attention to the relationship between architecture and morality. They thought that the depressing and unhealthy dark, narrow streets bred poverty and degeneration; and to eliminate them, an environment of sun, air and greenery had to be created. To achieve this goal they declared that the continuity of space must take precedence over the continuity of buildings; the continuity of voids over the continuity of solids. Thus, the existing urban fabric with its narrow streets was put to trial; the isolated buildings—objects in space—gained significance, and, consequently, a way was paved for the future Modern Movement—a way lasting some one hundred years.³ Today we can wonder whether their true legacy lies in their intentions or in the consequences of their intentions, whether they contributed to the modern world through their dreams of creating a new and a better society, or through their ideas which lead to streetless and, unfortunately, incoherent cities.

When the 19th century Victorian England celebrated the glory of the Industrial Civilization—the “golden age”—it also witnessed a steady disintegration of its society. This complex situation polarized opinions and generated new struggles between the ancients and the moderns. In architecture these contradictory attitudes existed side by side and fought for dominance. On one side, John Ruskin, hostile to progress, and on the other, his contemporary, Joseph Paxton, expressing it so well in the Crystal Palace.

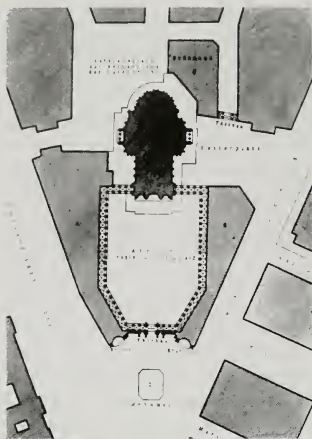
Ruskin was aware of the changes which industrialization ushered into Western Civilization, but one may wonder whether he was able to appreciate their true significance. His reaction to them was simply one of regret. He deplored the railroad, the smog, the pollution; he despaired of the new society with its constant rush and stress; he hated the new hectic life style which prevented people from living a dignified life and distanced them from beauty and art. In other words, he preferred to ignore the emerging new world order and was unable, or unwilling, to fight its symptoms. He was not interested in social problems to the extent Owen and Fourier were but submerged himself in the beautiful with the sublime. Within these constraints he advocated the superiority of the Gothic over classical style, and glorified its rationality and its bond with nature. But the Italian Gothic advocated by him, besides its aesthetic qualities, had practical reasons too. It "included convenient floor plans and the ease of relating facades to internal structure...[it] could unite generous window-openings with the much-desired sense of massiveness...[it] created the opportunity for almost continuous fenestration." The propagation of these functional values of the Gothic constituted, however, only a side effect of Ruskin's activity, "for the problem so important in the 1850s and 1860s [was] of expressing Victorian aspirations in great civic buildings."⁴ Thus, the role played by Ruskin in tracing new directions for architecture seems ambivalent. On the one side, he was slowing down the victory of mediocrity brought about by progress, modernity and their utilitarian concerns, on the other, he was ushering in new and advanced functional ideas; on one side, he deepened the

appreciation of beauty, on the other, he seemed to slow down the growth of welfare and a healthy human environment.

Paxton, on the other hand, was a practical man of action who based his work on different premises; he searched for systematic and comprehensive solutions to problems he confronted and the Crystal Palace presented for him a unique opportunity. Since it was not to be a great civic building but an exhibition pavilion, he was able to experiment with technology and select a method of construction best suited for this clearly defined objective. Perhaps this limited goal helped him in achieving such a forceful object. In a very short period of time, Paxton's office "turned out...hundreds of sheets of exquisite and entirely original details" and, thus, created "the first miracle of pre-fabrication... which for nearly one hundred years, was without sequel."⁵ But the Crystal Palace,

Joseph Paxton, Crystal Palace





Camillo Sitte, Votive Church Plaza, Vienna

although not the first building of iron, was "the first structure to attempt seriously the transference of metallic building from the purely 'utilitarian' field to that of 'architecture' – where the whole building was not just ornamented but was an aesthetic concept."⁶ Here one can see the pioneering role of Paxton in establishing the roots of a modern, universal and efficient way of building which, at the same time, was anonymous and culture-blind. To what extent the Crystal Palace is an art of building and to what extent architecture, is still being discussed.

The example of these two contemporaries illustrates the complexity of the conflict. Although their intentions were clear, the roles they played were much more complex. One protected old cultural values from erosion and disintegration but also helped to articulate the architecturally functional needs of a new society; the other, in an ingenious and precursory way, lead architecture toward a new civilization and,

at the same time, contributed to the shattering of its old cultural meaning. The contribution of these two men to the evolution of architecture will be discussed for years to come. Yet it seems obvious today that what Colin Rowe and the brothers Krier owe, at least partially, to Ruskin; Foster, Piano, and Rogers owe to the work of Paxton.

Similar situations developed when Camillo Sitte, in the *fin de siècle* Vienna, ignored the advances of technological society and, some fifteen years later, Sant'Elia revolted against tradition and the "old" culture which he considered obstacles to progress. The first wanted to protect the spiritual and cultural heritage of mankind,⁷ the second dreamt of moving humanity forward to a better future. Sitte wrote in the introduction to his book that:

*perhaps [it] will permit us to find the means of satisfying the three principal requirements of practical city building: to rid the modern system of blocks and regularly aligned houses; to save as much as possible of that which remains from ancient cities; and in our creation to approach more closely the ideal of the ancient models.*⁸

For Sant'Elia

the problem posed by Futurist architecture (was) not... a question of finding new mouldings and frames for windows and doors, of replacing columns, pilasters and corbels with cariatids, flies and frogs... We must invent and rebuild the Futurist city like an immense and tumultuous shipyard, agile, mobile and dynamic in every detail; and the Futurist house must be like a gigantic machine. The lifts must no longer be hidden away like tapeworms in the niches of stairwells; the stairwells themselves,

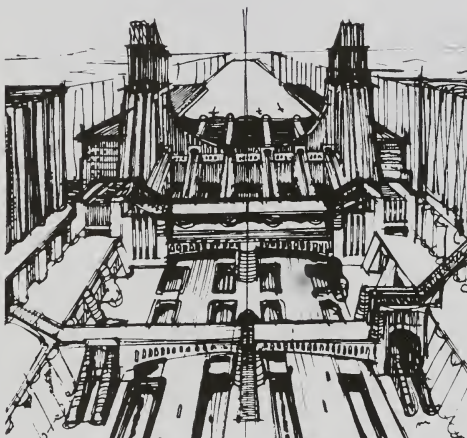
*rendered useless, must be abolished, and the lifts must scale the lengths of the facades like serpents of steel and glass.*⁹

For many years it seemed that Sitte had lost the battle. The Futurists, the revolutionary Russian architects, the heroes of the Modern Movement, all were eager to build a new world of mechanization, efficiency, and speed. They considered themselves radicals, progressives and visionaries, and such was their contribution to contemporary architecture. Their rational thinking, their concern with function and structure and their devotion to honesty in formal expressions cannot be belittled even by the fact that, in reality, they often compromised their revolutionary ideas for the sake of aesthetics and often, like many others, served the auto industry, greedy developers, and big business. Not surprisingly, however, the time has come when Sitte's sensitive and contextual proposals influenced postmodern architects and restored to a full respect all that Sant'Elia and the Moderns despised and hated: the context of the traditional city, the arcaded plazas, the ceremonial axes, the romantic squares and courts, and the ornate buildings that fit those plazas so well. Slowly, the oversimplifications of the Modern Movement became recognized and lead to a reaction—to the understanding that the complexity and richness of life require more than rationality and efficiency. But again, as often happens in life, some of the wonderful dreams of Ruskin and Sitte turned into bad dreams of Walt Disney.

The controversy between tradition and progress still goes on. The science-fiction of Archigram and Metabolists gave way to the pastiches of postmodern historicism, which in turn fights for dominance with Deconstruction and High-Tech. The conflict takes

a new dimension with the participation of the Prince of Wales in England and the involvement in the grand travaux in Paris of President Mitterand. As the debate widens, the question of its deeper meaning seems to be gaining importance. To elucidate it further, let us turn to another debate: to an argument between utility and spirituality.

While utility is closely related to technology and material progress, spirituality thrives on



Antonio Sant'Elia, *Casa a Gradiate*

tradition and feeds on art. While the first is based on the secular world, the second traces its roots to the mystery of the sacred. Both are governed by different laws and bloom in different forms. Architecture embraces both thereby obtaining its complex and ambiguous character. Paul Ricoeur, in his essay *Universal Civilization and National Cultures*, suggests that "everyone experiences the tension between the necessity for the free access to progress and, on the other hand, the exigency of safeguarding our heritage."¹⁰

The necessity of progress is basically served by the logic of scientific thinking, while the safeguarding of heritage is largely fulfilled by imagination, creativity and the arts. The first results in universal civilization, the second in unique, national cultures. Ricoeur says that science and technology develop and contribute to progress through the accumulation of means and tools, and through their constant improvement. The successes of a civilization stem from the continuous defeats of its previous shortcomings and from an uninterrupted replacement of old tools by new ones. They are improved step by step but, as Marshall McLuhan used to say, the moment they work they become obsolete. Thus, within this process, the old means—theories, inventions, or tools—cease to have practical value and, like the theories of Newton or the inventions of Edison, belong today to history. Nevertheless, without generations of great scientists and without their contributions to the growth of scientific thought, there would be no Einstein, no Heisenberg, no quantum theory, no electronic revolution and no progress.

Culture, on the other hand, or, more precisely, cultures, develop in a different way. According to Ricoeur, “unlike a set of tools which accumulates, sediments, and becomes deposited, a cultural tradition stays alive only if it constantly creates itself anew.”¹¹ Culture, as he says, is based on “fidelity and creation.” An artist must be faithful to the culture of his nation and, at the same time, in the name of this very culture, must constantly tear it down and build it again. But as civilization increases the efficiency of means and stores away layers upon layers of the old ones, cultures grow by creative leaps and bounds, in a spontaneous and intuitional manner and without any concern for utility,

efficiency, or progress. Creativity cannot be planned and can be recognized only in retrospect; to know beforehand what to create would negate the very act of creation. An artist, in his lonely effort destroys old appearances and clichés and creates things which—although initially incomprehensible—later become an “authentic expression of his people.”

Thus, the struggle of an artist is of a different character than the effort of a scientist, although both share creativity and discipline. It is not a sediment of layers of ideas and inventions but an unceasing rebirth of culture. Hence, Phidias cannot be displaced by Michelangelo, as Michelangelo cannot be displaced by Rodin, and Rodin by Brancusi. Rembrandt's paintings are today as much part of a living culture as the paintings by Monet or Picasso; and the architecture of the Parthenon, Chartres, and Ronchamps.

Can this distinction between civilization and culture, utility and spirituality shed some light on the role of architecture in society? Can architecture be reduced to art, to “art for art's sake” or, on the other hand, to sheer utility?

The idea that architecture belongs at the same time to the world of material progress and to the world of spiritual values—to the world of techno-science and to the world of art, to civilization and to culture—although questioned by some, not only persists but still gives architecture its ambiguous character and its tendency to oscillate between art and engineering. Reyner Banham, in *The Architecture of Well-tempered Environment* called it “the infantile fallacy that architecture is necessarily divisible into function and form,

and that the mechanical and cultural parts of the arts are in essential opposition."¹² Yet, the same Banham, a few pages later, suggests that:

the point of studying Las Vegas, ultimately, would be to see an example of how far environmental technology can be driven beyond the confines of architectural practice by designers who (for worse or better) are not inhibited by the traditions of architectonic culture, training and taste.¹³

Does, then, the "fallacy" stem from the architects' inhibitions and the traditions of architectural culture? Paradoxically, Banham seems to be confirming the existence of the conflict between these two forces by aligning himself with one of them: with technological progress and against architectural "traditions." Ten years later, Colin Rowe, who subscribed to the other side of this conflict, ridiculed in *Collage City* "...the architect as an athlete in a race with time and technology, beloved by Hannes Mayer and Reyner Banham...."¹⁴

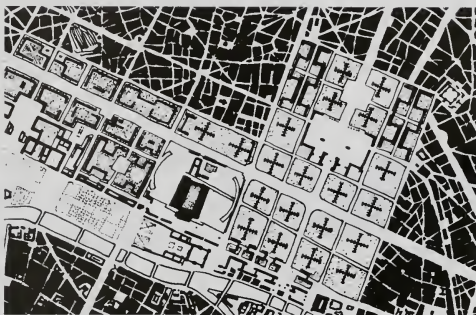
But it is Françoise Choay, who in *The Modern City: Planning in the 19th Century* distinguishes two models of spatial organization as manifestations of two legitimate visions:

One of these models, looking to the future and inspired by a vision of social progress we shall call progressist. The other, nostalgic in outlook, is inspired by the vision of a cultural community and may therefore be called culturalist.¹⁵

In this light one can approve or disapprove as much of the battles fought by Sant'Elia and the Modernists against tradition and its spiritual values, as of Ruskin's and Sitte's

neglect of material progress and prosperity. And it is this richness and ambiguity of architecture that forces us to say that all of them were at the same time right and wrong.

When formulating "revolutionary ideas" no one can judge them and no one can predict their long term impact on society. History



Le Corbusier, Plan Voisin, Paris

provides us with examples of conservative ideas leading to progress, and revolutionary ideas producing no good besides harm and pain. As Kolakowski says, "It is trivially true that very often the blessings and horrors of progress are inseparably tied to each other, as are the enjoyments and the miseries of traditionalism."¹⁶ This seems to be the case of architecture, too. Colin Rowe illustrated it well when comparing the project for the Stockholm Chancellery by Asplund, with Le Corbusier's revolutionary Plan Voisin. He pointed out that the attention to context, to the fabric of the city displayed by Asplund represented a more subtle and penetrating attitude toward architecture than the progressive, but in reality "destructive," ideas of Le Corbusier. On the other hand, who can blame Le Corbusier for trying to relate architecture to the radical social, economic, and political changes occurring in the

Western World at the beginning of the 20th century? Today one can wonder whether the *Plan Voisin* or the *Ville Radieuse* are merely layers of techno-scientific solutions or, like the project of Asplund, a lasting contribution to urban culture. The conflict of the old and the new goes on, but the present pluralistic world makes it more complex and our inquiry more difficult. It generates even a trend that would like to deprive not only this conflict, but architecture as such, any meaning whatsoever.

language, masks in this process the true meaning of what it expresses. Hence, abandoning the search for meaning, the deconstructionists concern themselves with the order and structure of architecture. Although the question whether architecture can be considered a language is too broad to be discussed here, it suffices to say that this idea limits the deconstructionists' concept of architecture and reduces its social role to mere self-referentiality. Consequently, the deconstructionists reject the notion of complexity and depth of architectural problems, concentrate on perfecting formal solutions, and limit architecture to the technicalities of "how" to achieve them—to mere virtuosity. Indeed, their fascinating projects, prepared often with the aid of computer graphics, show an extraordinary exuberance of inventiveness and forms but, alas, a lack of content and purpose.

In the search for suitable means of expression the deconstructionists reclaimed from history the architectural vocabulary of Russian Constructivism. They ignored, however, the fact that theirs and the constructivists' aims belonged to opposite worlds. While constructivism was a movement rooted in social revolution, deconstructivism in architecture is a style based on linguistic theory. While one tried to change the world, the other decided to ignore it. While one sought solutions to satisfy the needs of a new society, the other lead architecture away from socio-political and economic realities into a wonderland of language games, textuality and narratives. But is deconstruction innocent? And is it really as indifferent to the outside world as it claims to be? As the constructivists wanted to be part of the communist society, so the deconstructionists are part of the consumer society



Gunnar Asplund, Stockholm Chamcellary

Let us turn in this search to a group representing such a trend which seems to avoid the snares of commitment: a group concerned with architecture as such, and indifferent to its social and environmental implications. Its members are influenced by a presently fashionable linguistic theory and literary criticism, deconstructionism. Some representatives of this group, often called deconstructivists, claim that architecture, like language, is an independent of reality system able to express accurately only itself. Unfortunately, they add, architecture, like

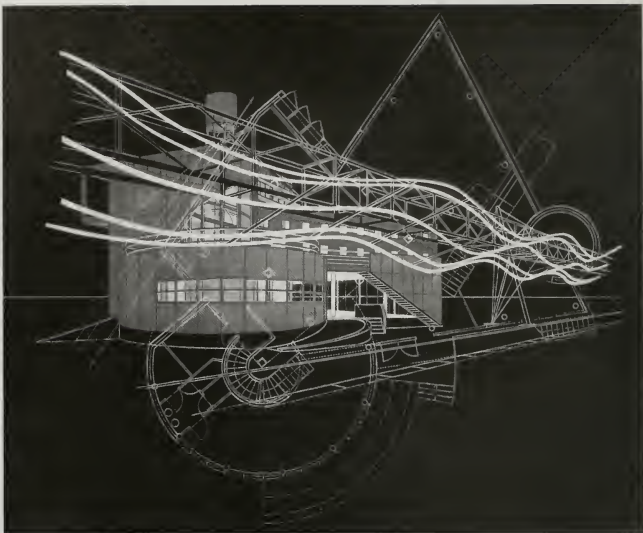
(represented mainly by wealthy clients, elite patrons, and glossy journals and magazines). They do not attempt to “build a new world” and do not intend to criticize the existing one. Simply, as Mark Wigley says, “they produce a devious architecture...in which form distorts itself in order to reveal itself anew.”¹⁷ Thus, they go on producing new forms, interested in mere novelty or, to put it differently, in “otherness.” This benign goal masks, however, their complicity in the non-ideological workings of the “free market,” in the struggle for dominance of sleek publications, of media recognition, and of

their conviction (in spite of their belief in pluralism) that theirs is the truth.

There is yet another side of deconstruction that requires attention. Eisenman tries to transfer the newest developments in science to architecture. He uses fractal geometry, Boolean cubes, and DNA as inspiration for his forms and, in this way, situates himself at the cutting edge of science and progress. But is he? When the constructivists, who were overwhelmed by the spate of unprecedented technological inventions, used airplanes and engines as inspiration for their forms, they

Jakov Chernukhov, Fantasy 5





Bernard Tschumi, Park de la Villette

searched not only for ways of expressing the new epoch but also for ways of bringing about the dreams of the new society. No matter how superficial their efforts were, how little they were concerned with the workings of airplanes and engines as inspiration for their forms, they searched not only for ways of expressing the new epoch but also for ways of bringing about the dreams of the new society. Their main objective was to move the society forward and to express it in new forms. For Eisenman, the newest achievements of science are sources of new forms too, but for architecture, which he understands "as an independent discourse, free of external values."¹⁸ Here we seem to witness the irony of history. The Russian constructivists, in spite of their diverse points of view described, for example, by Catherine Cooke,¹⁹ were well aware of

their historical mission, of participating in the making of history. The deconstructionists, on the other hand, seem to reflect, what some would call, the "twilight of the West." Unlike the constructivists who believed in science and technology and their power to improve the world, the deconstructionists witness the inertia of a technoscience devoid of direction and goal. They witness a drastic change in the meaning of cultural production and abandon the "senseless" and shapeless postmodern world as not worthy of their attention, reflection and interpretation. Consequently, they turn inward and concentrate on a world they build for themselves. In this situation the enthusiasm which accompanied the efforts of the constructivists has been replaced by the disenchantment, cynicism and nihilism of the deconstructionists. The fact that these



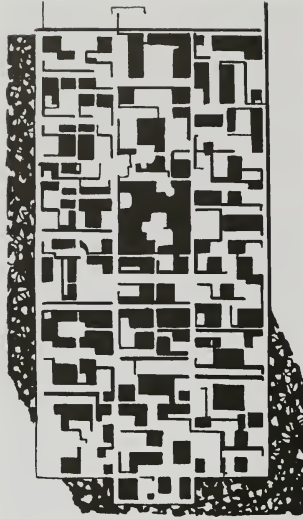
Frank Gehry, Office Building, Venice, California

two moments in history generated formally close and yet ideologically distinct approaches to architecture seems only to confirm the idea that architecture cannot be separated from the outside world.

But what has happened in the meantime to the historicists? The serious concerns of Ruskin, Sitte, or Asplund have been replaced by the frivolous populist imagery, pastiches of historical forms and Disneyland fantasies of such architects as Graves, Moore, or Venturi. Although their architectural languages differ substantially from each other, their general attitude is the same. One wonders where this attitude may lead. And, looking at the Seven Dwarfs facade of the Disney headquarters in Burbank, California by Michael Graves, one wonders whether this could be the icon of the historicists' approach. Can we consider it a contribution to the conflict between tradition and progress or rather, as Charles Jencks seems to suggest, to a conflict between culture and kitsch?²⁰

There exists another movement which, in contradistinction to deconstruction, and to a lesser extent to historicism, concerns itself with the present reality. It wants to solve the problems of contemporary society with the help of technology, and is considered by some a spearhead of techno-scientific thought in architecture: the "High-Tech" of Late-Modernism. The movement sees the world with optimism, and believes that the advances of technology derived from the studies of NASA and the aerospace industry, for example, can make a positive impact on the built environment. Martin Pawley, an enthusiast of what he calls "technology transfer," gives examples of the possibilities offered to architecture by

industries far removed from construction: solvent-welded PVC roofing derived originally from swimming-pool liners; flexible neoprene gaskets using a material developed originally for cable-jacketing; adhesive-fixed glazing transferred from the automobile industry; superplastic



Candilis, Josic, Woods: Free University, Berlin

*aluminum panels and metallic fabric fireproofing from aerospace; tensioning devices from trailer sidescreens; raised-floor systems from jetliners; photochromatic glazing from jet bombers.*²¹

Architecture cannot lightly ignore such possibilities. But to be able to take full advantage of the ever progressing achievements of technology it must pay a price: it must relinquish its traditional role in society as an agent of culture and must expedite society's adaptation to the world yet to come. Along this line of reasoning Pawley suggests that "unlike the 'historic' contribution of permanent architecture, the architecture of the future must be in continual transition."²² Here is an unequivocal position in the conflict between tradition and progress: architecture is no more; what is left is a utilitarian

mechanism whose validity is reduced to mere efficiency and adaptability. From this point of view, Pawley seems to chastise such architects as Norman Foster and Richard Rogers for compromising High-Tech and for abandoning the ideal of total flexibility: the ideal of Buckminster Fuller, Archigram, Yona Friedman and the Metabolists. He seems to forget, however, that already Team X concerned itself with flexibility, change and adaptability, and was defeated (for now, at least) by the forces of life. The Free University of Berlin by Candilis, Josic and Woods, an instrument of adaptability and change which magnified these notions to almost symbolic proportions, is all but forgotten today.

Yet at closer inspection High-Tech seems to be another case of ambiguity in the understanding of architecture. The question arises to what extent High-Tech belongs to the sphere of civilization and represents another layer of technological sediments, and to what extent it is part of the world of culture—a constant renewal of the timeless heritage of mankind. Is, for example, the Lloyds of London a "historical document" representing a distinct level of technological development at a particular time in history or an object of culture which will make a lasting imprint on the skyline of London? Must architecture choose between art and technology, culture and civilization? And if so, where does the Eiffel Tower, for example, belong? Should we consider it a "historic contribution of permanent architecture," or an example of 19th century technique whose time has passed? Should we, as Pawley does, describe architecture as "an occult world of ignorance and obsolete mystery,"²³ or should we be less orthodox and more broad-minded? The problem certainly is more complex than Pawley would like us to believe.

The De Menil Museum by Renzo Piano in Houston offers an example of architecture that goes beyond High-Tech. It respects context and local character and in scale, material and color relates with great subtlety to its residential surroundings. As far as high technology is concerned, it uses it sparingly. On the other hand, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank by Foster which, one must admit, fits equally well into the skyline of Hongkong's Central Business District, is an exercise in the most advanced technology. Its technological splendor achieved at an exorbitant cost seems, however, to question its real meaning. Is it, like the Lloyds of London, an experiment in technology condemned to obsolescence and demolition, or a contribution to the financial culture of the late 20th century? Will the bank become a lasting monument to human aspirations, to human creativity—to culture, or, in the name of the endless flow of inventions, is it destined to the dustbin of history? As the significance of science and technology in the present

society grows, so the traditional meaning of architecture diminishes. But this symptom of our times indicates a deeper problem: a danger that the spirit of techno-science will spread across the globe and create its own anonymous and transitory civilization deprived of any character, identity, and meaning. And such will be its architecture. Can our present rational, scientific and technological mode of thinking overcome its own limitations and reach beyond itself? Can the value judgments, excluded from the world of science, gain legitimacy again?

Richard Rogers reached, perhaps, the heart of the matter when he said that "what has failed is not modern architecture but our ethical system. Science and technology have outstripped our capacity to deal with them. This we must redress."²⁴ Yet we cannot escape the vicious circle of intentions, compromises and results. In his hands, as in the hands of other High-Tech architects, technological efficiency has been transformed into its mere symbol, into show-pieces of corporate clients. Here High-Tech joins forces with historicism: the Lloyds of London by Rogers and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank by Foster, like the New York AT&T Building by Johnson, or the Humana Building by Graves, are all aesthetically different, yet all belong to the same category.

Can the conflict between tradition and progress, between material well-being and spiritual values, between civilization and cultures be declared invalid? The skeptical mind will always question and attack the utopian one—the one that seeks a perfect world; the progressive mind will always revolt against the complacency of the conservative one—the one that sees in the good old days an image of the future. Without this conflict, to quote Kolakowski again,

Richard Rogers, Lloyds of London



photo © Lesk-Bühner

*the victory of utopian dreams would lead us to a totalitarian nightmare and the utter downfall of civilization, whereas the unchallenged domination of the skeptical spirit would condemn us to a hopeless stagnation.*²⁵

Thus the conflict between these two forces seems to be our only hope. What constitutes danger is the attitude of those who declare indifference to “all that takes place within civilization,” who consider architecture an independent of reality system, and who abandon the battle for a better environment. Those architects, although immersed in contemporary problems, dilute them in language games, whimsical aesthetics and novelty at any cost. They concern themselves with such esoteric notions as “futile permanence,” “errant signification,” or “indeterminate signifieds,” but stop short of critically assessing problems of our society and our civilization. This attitude is understandable. But is it commendable? As David Harvey writes in *The Condition of Postmodernity* “In period of confusion and uncertainty, the turn to aesthetics [of whatever form] becomes more pronounced.” Later he adds:

*The experience of time and space has changed, the confidence in the association between scientific and moral judgments has collapsed, aesthetics has triumphed over ethics as a prime focus of social and intellectual concern, images dominate narratives, ephemerality and fragmentation take precedence over eternal truths and unified politics....*²⁶

Although this condition may be a passing mode, architects who thrive on it ignore its temporality and act as if theirs were the final truths. By turning to aesthetics and ignoring

ethics they seem to forget that to “refuse to acknowledge the inevitability, or even the reality, of evil, is also to kill or weaken the will that is needed to triumph over matter.”²⁷ It is no wonder then that those architects who set themselves apart from the present undefinable world escape into the sphere of aesthetics and, in essence, surrender to a consumer society and to its aims of publicity and profit.

Perhaps for a consumer civilization – the logical child of Enlightenment – it does not matter whether the old or the new triumphs. Perhaps for technology only efficiency matters. And perhaps for language nothing matters at all. But for architects the problem still remains the same; even the most daring inventions of the human mind will not change the human spirit and the human heart. Man lives today surrounded by electronic codes, signs, images and gadgets but he also carries with him the weight of a biologically based inner nature. He may employ the most powerful computers in the pursuit of material well-being, but he will never cease searching for his roots, for sources of his dignity. And it is culture that provides him with a link to his past, with the understanding of who he is.

Perhaps, as some say, there is no role for architecture in the contemporary society; perhaps architecture has no future; perhaps it is a remnant of the past. But, if that is not true, why should architecture abandon its cultural and spiritual role in society? Likewise why should architecture prevent man from moving forward, from trying to improve his lot? This is the dilemma of architecture, its essence and its soul. The struggle for this soul will continue with every new generation of architects until architecture ceases to exist.



Cesar Pelli, Canary Wharf, London

But it is not only architecture whose existence is threatened today. The world itself is threatened. The real danger to both comes now from a new source. It comes from the ecological crisis caused by our fragmented and directionless civilization. And perhaps, like the Industrial Revolution centuries ago, the Ecological Revolution today may change the face of the world again, for the threat is of

global proportion and concerns everybody independent of place, age, and race: the poor and the rich, the young and the old, the educated and the ignorant. It may give new meaning to our coexistence with nature²⁸ and to our mutual interdependence. If that happens, architects will have to be ready for new challenges, new tasks, and new conflicts.

Endnotes

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20. Charles Jencks, "Post-Modernism Between Kitsch and Culture," *Post-Modernism on Trial, Architectural Design Profile 88*, (London: Academy Editions, 1990) p. 27.
21. Martin Pawley, *Theory and Design in the Second Machine Age*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990) p. 153.
22. Martin Pawley, "Technology Transfer," *The Architectural Review* (September 1987) p. 35.
23. Ibid., p. 39.
24. Richard Rogers, *Directions in Current Architecture*, (New York: London/St. Martin's Press, Academy Editions, 1988) p. 10.
25. Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, p. 145.
26. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989) p. 327, p. 328.
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Invasion of the Building Snatchers

A Contemporary Architectural Avant Garde and Its Heritage¹

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"The future is always the same; it's the past that changes."

—Beniamino Placido

"...criticism is a device to detect false claims."

—Thomas McEvilley

In Architecture schools and in magazines around the globe, the new architecture of DECONSTRUCTIVISM heralds the eclipse of Postmodernism. The new style is everywhere, from Seattle to Atlanta, London to Venice, Tokyo to Buenos Aires. Few schools of architecture (outside of Switzerland) have resisted. Fueled by the publishing industry (three DECONSTRUCTIVISM issues of the London-based *Architectural Design* have appeared to date) the new style also announces the eclipse of the old modernisms, from the International Style and the New Objectivity to the New Brutalism. Neo-Rationalism and virtually all the other movements of the last 70 years are also ousted. Except Futurism and Constructivism.

Deconstructivism, or DECON, is most certainly a misnomer, like the term 'Rationalism' used to denote the Italian avant-garde of the 20s and 30s, and it would be unfair and oversimplified to lump all the buildings and architects of this new ortho-

doxy of diagonal intersections, glass shards, and asymmetrical unbalance into the single category of DECONSTRUCTIVISM. Many corporate and commercial firms have been influenced by Deconstructivist projects. Some have even been able to combine the language of Deconstructivism with that of Postmodernism.

The term is already in widespread use and we can easily recognize the duck when it appears in a full-color magazine spread. I will, however, not employ the "D-word" here with a broad brush to include all buildings, projects, (and architects) with a similar quack. Rather, I am interested in discussing those architects who maintain that the new style goes ineluctably and irrevocably with the times. I will question the premise that Deconstructivism is more 'in step' with our time than any of the other architectural styles around.

The new architecture is the architecture of angst, pain, and turmoil; Peter Eisenman, one of the 'movement's' most vocal proponents, has called it the architecture of the post-nuclear/post-holocaust age. This new architecture which seeks to replace an *ancien regime*. That *ancien regime* is Postmodernism, but the new architecture is not the old modernism. It is rather an

architecture grounded in the specific realities of today; it is hyper-modern.

As such, Deconstructivism has pulled off a terminology coup. Like the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, the Deconstructivists are 'more modern than thou.' Like the 'hawks,' who commanded the American flag during the Vietnam war, modernity has become the exclusive domain of those architects who use multiple diagonals, tilt-out walls, and plan-rotations. This coup parallels an earlier one by the original Modern Movement architects of the '20s and '30s. Like their counterparts in the inter-war period, Deconstructivist architects and their apologists have usurped the term 'Modern.' 'Decon' is now the only modern game in town. Other modernist architects, including those who would subscribe to many of the original tenets of the Modern Movement, are *retardataire*. They are made to feel as if they aren't *modern enough*. In the thirties, architects were made to feel the same way by the proponents of the International Style. Architects like August Perret, Paul Cret, Gio Ponti, Peter Behrens, W.M. Dudok, and Eliel Saarinen were modern architects, too.

Deconstructivism is avowedly not a revival of the modernism of the '20s in terms of social agenda, the organization of space for use, and the role of advanced technology. It rejects the nationalisms and regionalisms of the '30s. It abjures the Neo-Realism of the '40s, the optimism of the '50s, the social determinisms of the '60s, the Postmodernism and Neo-Rationalism of the '70s, and the bourgeois formalism of the early '80s. The new movement has brought back the human body, we are told (was it ever missing?), but this revival gives us the body 'in pain.'

The new architecture is propelled by an intellectual fuel composed of an *elan vital*, a pure symbolic essence. Its legitimization is based on its capacity to represent today through pure *charisma*. What this may mean in historical, intellectual, and logical terms is interesting to consider. In this essay, I will first examine the basis of Deconstructivism's self-justifications. I will then question some of Deconstructivism's avowed purposes, in particular its need to reflect a presumed contemporary *Zeitgeist* of angst and uncertainty. I will conclude with what I reckon is Deconstructivism's real essence: a highly decorative style, less revolutionary than most of its proponents would like to admit. Most important, I will argue why Deconstructivism would better be called Neo-Futurism.

1. During the period Reyner Banham called 'The First Machine Age' the German philosopher and economic theorist, Max Weber, wrote a book called *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.² In it he set out a simple set of ideas for how governments, regimes and socio-economic systems justify their very existence. Weber identified what he called 'the pure forms of legitimate authority.' They were the *rational*, the *traditional*, and the *charismatic*. Nations, peoples, and governments consider themselves to have legitimacy, Weber argued, because of rational or traditional reasons, or via the charisma of their leaders or their ideologies. This is not difficult to illustrate, although the pure forms are hard to find in almost any particular governmental system, especially in this century. The 'Divine Right of Kings,' an extreme version of the *traditional*, no longer passes muster in most monarchies. The British Royal Family may retain a *traditional* right to the throne, but not to govern.

In the modern world the pure forms of legitimate authority are intertwined; they resemble certain chemical elements (sodium, for example) which exist free in nature but only in compounds or ores. Western democracies are widely accepted to be primarily *rational* systems, with certain strong *traditions* (like the Anglo-American legal system), exuding a modicum of *charisma*. But these governments never possess so much *charisma* that it overshadows the *rational*.

Tradition still dominates in countries like Saudi Arabia. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany relied heavily on charisma and discarded tradition. *Rationality* was almost non-existent. In Italy under Fascism, the famous dictum "Mussolini is always right" serenely demonstrates such lack of rationality. Socialist societies have sought to balance the rational and the charismatic; the *traditional* has no part in the operations of the system. That is, in theory, at least.

Weber's lens can be placed neatly over the phenomenon of architecture. Certain styles, periods, or movements are heavily *rational*, others are primarily *traditional* or *charismatic*. Renaissance protagonists elaborated the *rational* in a parade of treatises. They also blatantly paraded a love for *tradition*. Palladio, for example, wrote that because the Ancients made such beautiful temples we should study them in order to know how churches ought to be built.

The Greek revival of the early 19th century was short on the rational, but very long on the traditional. Viollet-le-due tried to rationalize the *charismatic*. Without pressing the point too far, it might be reasonable to assert that a balanced, deep, and significant

architecture needs nourishment from each: *the rational, traditional and charismatic*. Like Vitruvius's *Firmitas, Commoditas, and Venustas*, (FIRMNESS, COMMODITY, and DELIGHT), "well building" requires at least *something* of all three.

Out of all the influential architectural movements of our century, Futurism was the most charismatic. This helps us to understand the relation between its founder, F.T. Marinetti, and Benito Mussolini. Constructivism, while proposing a kind of *rationalism*, was also heavily *charismatic*. Neither of these movements had much interest in *tradition*. Architects closer to the mainstream of the Modern Movement, architects like Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mendelssohn and Oud, tended to balance the three pure forms of legitimate authority, although the *traditional* was dragged along, out of sight, way back in third place. While the protagonists of the Modern Movement tended to play up the *rational*, which, in their eyes, would make their architecture *charismatic*, they also downplayed *tradition* in the polemical writings of the propaganda war. And for good reason. What combatant wants his enemies to think they share even part of his ideology? History has taught us that such pamphleteering portrayed an incomplete, if not systematically distorted portrait of the architecture of the '20s and '30s; the *traditional* was much more important to those architects than they originally admitted.

Postmodernism was an attempt to infuse the *rationalism* of modernism with a heightened sense of *tradition*. This is not to say PoMo lacked *charisma*. Movements cannot be launched without *charisma*, whether it be proffered with the statesmanlike control

of Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction*, or as a call to arms like Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*. Deconstructivism has now pushed the pendulum in the other direction. It is a self-proclaimed anti-rational movement, at least in terms of architectural rationality as we have hitherto known it; Deconstructivism purports to reflect the times: chaos, uncertainty, unclarity, a foreboding Zeitgeist. It overtly rejects tradition, at least in its theory. A deconstructivist might well argue that the exclusion of the *traditional* and the *rational* is exactly what makes the movement so unique and unprecedented. We should not forget Futurism, however.

Deconstructivism, like Postmodernism, was hatched in the academic communities of Europe and America, and its anti-rational agenda is well represented in numerous design studio projects and methodologies within academe. One of the more popular methods is for students to make 'conceptual' (albeit physical, that is, real, i.e., palpable, what I mean here is 3-D) of architectural ideas deriving from fantasies about, say, literary or filmic themes, or the LA freeway system. Copper, brass, wire mesh, wire glass, etc., are employed to make 'conceptual' models. These models are not intended to be literal depictions of buildings; they are not scale models, but rather the adumbration of 'ideas,' 'meta-models.' Figuration portrays abstraction. Brass in the model doesn't mean brass in the building, it just means brass in the model. (In the past, students used abstract models to portray real spaces and buildings.) Students then carefully draw shadow-renderings of the model. The shadow pattern becomes the initial *parti*, or organizational idea, for the building. (Assuming they cast their shadows

accurately, students at least get a good descriptive geometry lesson. And these studios are tame).³

Parallel to these methodologies is the interest in drawing and representation as an end in itself, what Robin, Evans called a, "...consumability [that] has most often been achieved by redefining [drawings'] ...role as similar to that of early twentieth-century paintings, in the sense of being less concerned with their relation to what they represent than with their own constitution. And so the drawings themselves have become the repositories of effects and the focus of attention, while the transmutation that occurs between drawing and building remains to a large extent an enigma."⁴

This sort of method and its attendant fetishized drawing-objects are purveyed as an antidote to the 'false rationalism' of programmatic bubble-diagrams or nine-square grids, typical of traditional plan generators. Behind it is a very modern concept: the acceptance of the relativity of all initial architectural decisions. The method, which assumes that all points of origin are equally valid, might well be the ultimate DECONSTRUCTION (as compared to deconstructivism). Deconstruction, the literary theory from which some of the principles of Deconstructivist architecture flow, holds that all interpretations of 'texts' are equally valid. A building, like a poem, is a 'text.' As the deconstructors of literature tell us, no one person can hold the key to the 'proper' interpretation of any text. Interpretation is open to interpretation. If *interpretation* is open to interpretation, then why not the *generation* of 'text'? So goes the logic; meaning anything goes in the logic. Here is where we enter the world of Big Julie

from Damon Runyon's *Guys and Dolls*. He's the gambler-hoodlum who shoots craps with his own dice, from which the dots have been removed. "I remembers where the dots was," he tells his associates.

Post-Structuralism, the movement of which DECONSTRUCTION is but one manifestation, tends to assert multiplicity of meanings, individual accessibility, and the ultimate subjectivity of all understanding. The viewer puts his/her own interpretation into the act of 'reading.' Post-Structuralism abjures elitism. Railing against modernist criticism, the post-structuralists might be better placed alongside the architectural radicals of the late 60s, in particular those behaviorists of the so-called 'user-needs' movement.

Post-Structuralism is, in fact, aligned with Postmodernism in literature and art. The connection which architectural DECONSTRUCTIVISM has assumed to exist with post-structuralism of other disciplines is a paper connection, existing solely in the minds of the architectural deconstructivists. Like postmodernism in art and literature, Postmodernism in architecture was a pluralist idea, allowing for multiple interpretations of the modern world, while Deconstructivism is a single-interpretation theory, assuming an overarching technological *Zeitgeist* which eclipses all other interpretations. The single-*Zeitgeist* doctrine marches in step with the anti-rationalism of the movement. Such anti-rationalism is typical of theories which exude univalent, totalitarian ideas of how things ought to be done. Rationalism, by contrast, is moderate, as Peter Collins has explained.⁵ "Rationalism has always been essentially a tolerant doctrine," writes Collins. "It is as uncongenial to those for

whom architectural creativity is analogous to Action Painting as it is to technocrats who dream of creating an everlasting urban utopia within five years."⁶

In practice, the formal repertory of the style closely reflects the vocabulary of Futurism and Constructivism, with even less interest in establishing geometric, spatial, and social order than the Futurists and (especially) the Constructivists had. The relationship between our present 'avant garde' and Futurism has been underplayed; the style might be better called "Neo-Futurism," or "Futurist Revival." Futurism, like Deconstructivism, but unlike Constructivism, was nihilistic. Like Deconstructivism, Futurism took an essentially passive and uncritical role towards the excesses of urban squalor and unbridled technological pollution, with its acceptance of virtually anything that industrial development and science fiction have tossed in our path. Marinetti argued for, among other things, the destruction of Venice. Violence was the catchphrase of his Manifesto: "We want to glorify war—the only cure for the world—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists..."⁷ (Marinetti literally went into the streets with his squads in acts of symbolic violence.) A contemporary parallel can be found on Donald Bates's flyer for his architecture program at the Le Corbusier Unite at Briey: "This endeavour is... a speculation on the mode of working which anticipates that the grasping of understanding be seen as a particular act of violence. This potential brutality is found readily in that apparatus of thought and experience named 'architecture'."

Marinetti's attitude toward his craft is shared by certain protagonists of the new

architecture. The following description of Marinetti's Futurist Variety Theatre by James Joll might do for a few contemporary personalities.

"Everything must be absurd: the actresses would have green hair, violet arms, blue bosoms, and orange chignons: glue would be placed on the seats of the theatre and the same seat sold to two people; itching and sneezing powder would be scattered among the audience: free seats would be offered to notorious eccentrics, and so on."⁸

Like the Deconstructivists, Futurist apologists attempted to claim certain architects and other artists as part of their movement. "...attempts were made to claim Stravinsky and even Richard Strauss as the true Futurist musicians."⁹ Frank Gehry has been appropriated by the Deconstructivists, despite his lack of interest in their agenda.

In the 60s Archigram, Archizoom, Superstudio and other neo-futurist movements stood for a technological Zeitgeist, but these architects were not simply interpreters of the status quo. Their schemes and dreams were not merely reflections of the apparent technological/social/cultural conditions. They were rather statements about what ought to be, how people ought to live. Today the squalor of 'Blade Runner' becomes a paradigm for a 'new urbanism.'

The revival of these seventy year-old architectural standards and theories casts suspicion on the idea of the Deconstructivist (read: Neo-Futurist) rejection of tradition and proves once again that the Emperor's clothes cannot be tailored without employing an existing bolt of conceptual cloth (or is it a conceptual bolt of cloth?). But despite such

logical inconsistencies—indeed, perhaps because of them—*charisma* seems to be the name of the game, as it was for Futurism.

2. Is modern life truly chaotic and unstable, and if so, is architecture an appropriate vehicle to express our atomized society? If we consider the half-century since the end of WWII, our evaluation must be mixed. On the one side, we have had a nuclear threat, a global population explosion, a depletion of natural resources, terrorism, and the greenhouse effect; in 1961 we teetered on the brink of nuclear holocaust.

On the other side, we have also witnessed over the past 4-1/2 decades one of the most prosperous periods of economic growth in history. Advances in agricultural science, medicine, and domestic technology have made much of the world a more productive and more prosperous place. It might even be argued that after Nuremberg our moral fibre has improved. (Most civilized nations have even outlawed the Death Penalty.)

Modern life, in the West at least, is more predictable than it ever was. (None of the Deconstructivists has asserted that the new architecture expresses the angst of East Africa.) We can reasonably expect to live to a ripe old age and not get cut down by communicable diseases like plague, diphtheria, or polio. We have pensions for our old-age, seat-belts and air-bags for our cars, even the Heimlich maneuver to avert accidental suffocation on an errant chicken bone. We can avoid the roulette of sex: birth control or abortion to prevent or terminate a pregnancy, and 'safe' techniques to prevent disease. We can even replace some defective organs. And much of our future is in our own hands: we can choose not to smoke or eat

saturated fats. Such knowledge and techniques were unavailable to Raphael, Mozart, Schubert or H.H. Richardson.

Where are the uncertainties and insecurities of modern life? The Cold War is over. The real possibility of a nuclear holocaust—that dark cloud hanging over the generation of the 1960s—recedes from consciousness as world tensions ease. Those 1960s architects were committed to represent the potential stability of modern life through ‘rational’ and structurally stable forms. There were even attempts to extend rationality into design methods, as witnessed by the work of Christopher Alexander and others. Why didn’t those architects interpret their age as unstable, and ‘express’ that instability in their designs? One possible answer is that they didn’t think of it, they who were so moralistically engaged in making a “better world.” ‘Chaos,’ it would seem, can be connected to the *rational* only tenuously, and to the *traditional* not at all. Yet it attaches itself quite easily to the *charismatic*.

But to give ‘chaos’ the benefit of the doubt let us for the moment accept that the ‘chaos’ interpretation is but one among many acceptable interpretations of the essential *Zeitgeist* of our time. The ‘order’ interpretation would be another. By what measure is the ‘chaos’ interpretation better or more accurate than the ‘order’ interpretation? Viewed through a deconstructor’s lens, the ‘order’ interpretation of modern society is just as valid as the ‘chaos’ interpretation. If the point is at best moot, then it seems patently absurd that an architectural style purporting to represent either interpretation could claim to represent the *Zeitgeist* of contemporary life. Yet Deconstructivism claims such hegemony.

There is another side to the ‘chaos’ interpretation, however. This is the ‘uncertainty-in-science’ principle: the fact that scientific certainty was shattered over and over again during the 20th century by Einstein, Heisenberg, and more recently by scientists who speak of ‘chaos’—rather than order—as the normal state of the Universe. Today’s architects who wish to make a parallel architectural theory should remember what happened when early 20th century theorists made similar connections to the science of their day. Theo Van Doesburg believed that 4-dimensional, non-Euclidian estimates in space-time would make everything “very easy.” The resultant Space-Time concept became the watchword for several generations of architects. The most strident of these architects and apologists fooled themselves (and many others as well) into thinking that the Mies’s Barcelona Pavilion expressed dynamism and spatial simultaneity better than—rather than slightly differently from—the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles or the Mosque of Cordoba. As Giorgio Grassi explained in 1983: “It is actually pathetic to see the architects of the ‘heroic’ period ...trying with difficulty to accommodate themselves to...isms’ [cubism, suprematism, neo-plasticism]; experimenting in a perplexed manner because of their fascination with the new doctrines, measuring them, only later to realize their ineffectuality....”¹⁰

Numerous Avant-Garde architects, and untold students enrolled in American architecture schools, would like architecture to behave like certain other artistic disciplines. Many purveyors of these disciplines examine the ‘underside’ of contemporary life; the nitty gritty and the unpleasant. The architects are envious of

playwrights, and novelists, filmmakers, and performance artists. This is perfectly understandable. Various artists evoke the uncertainties, chaos and atomization of modern life, just as artists from Velasquez to Brecht to Godard have done. Moreover, artists whose work mirrors the brighter side of modern life are usually dismissed as saccharine and sentimental. It's difficult to imagine, however, that Brecht would have wanted his house to do what his plays did.

Further, it is eminently possible that literature, performance art, theatre, film, etc., are naturally more conducive to expressing our collective angst than are the applied design disciplines of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, civil engineering, or industrial design. Should automobile designers design unsafe cars? Should refrigerator designers create units which periodically malfunction so that we may better understand the life cycle of growth and decay? Computer programs that crash without warning would certainly call attention to the 'best laid plans of mice and men.' To be made aware of the ultimate fragility of all human existence doesn't dictate that those who are innocent of its causes should physically suffer for it. Perhaps architects should admit that architecture portrays angst rather poorly, and rather cheaply. A disintegrating masonry wall, a distorted and rotated frame, and an unfathomable zig-zag mass, are paraded as the emblems of an age of anxiety. These gestures pale as anemic trivialities compared to the themes of alienation which inhabit the novels of Gunter Grass, the films of Werner Herzog, or the plays of Samuel Beckett.

There is a wonderful irony here. Despite the rhetoric about angst-ridden modern realities,

Deconstructivist projects and buildings are extraordinarily picturesque. They are directly accessible to a generation raised on TV, Star Wars-style special effects, and abstract art movements. The forms are, in short, nothing new. The architecture is pretty, the way driftwood is pretty. In a society inured to shock and jaded by an overload of stimuli, the architectural projects of the avant-garde are probably more dangerous physically than culturally. (Teachers of architecture might consider getting a tetanus shot before handling their students' models.) This new architecture is not shocking; it does not test our assumptions or our sensibilities; it does not question our 'norms' and our bourgeois lives. It simply titillates. Futurism and Dada are part of history. Their revival is the ultimate in sentimentality.

Assuming we can intuit the essence of an 'age' while we are still living in it, does it matter whether architects are self-consciously interested in expressing it? Won't their products express their age—at least after the fact—whether they like it or not? Nobody, even a layman, will mistake the work of McKim, Meade and White for that of Bramante. Nor will most persons mistake the work of Leon Krier or Michael Graves for that of Paul Cret, or even the buildings of Richard Meier for those of Le Corbusier.

The 1920s is often called the Jazz Age. It was also the First Machine Age, as Banham called it; the Age of Political Ferment; the Age of Greed, the Age of Nationalism, etc. How do architects choose which *Zeitgeist* designation[s] to follow? If recent events in Eastern Europe are any indication, Nationalism and regionalism might well be the victorious *Zeitgeist* of the 1990s. For architecture, this might imply all manner of

vernacular and traditional revival, hardly consistent with the Deconstructivist agenda.

It is difficult to imagine that Jay Gatsby would have been a more representative character of his era had he lived in a house by Gropius, or even Behrens. If Gatsby's neo-Renaissance villa in East Egg could neatly represent the Jazz Age (and the Age of Greed), then what artifact doesn't symbolize its age? The revival of Gatsby-era tweeds in the 1980s, enhanced by the popularity of numerous films set in the '20s, is as emblematic of the '80s and '90s as the personal computer. Subtle changes in fabric and cut, like the differences between the architectures of Lutyens and Soane, make it unlikely that Ralph Lauren's clothes will ever be mistaken for the 'originals.' And if they are, so what? When the tower of St. Mark collapsed in 1902, the Venetians rebuilt it *dove'era com'era*, ("where it was, how it was") by decree of the mayor. But the new tower was built of reinforced concrete and equipped with an elevator. Despite the reservations of some of the foreign press of the time, the Venetians decided that the expression of 20th century technology was less important than the continuity of culture. To interpret artifacts as the representation of aspirations and nostalgia, not reality, is an accepted norm of historiography.

Further, many historians chronicle the decline of the Republic of Venice well before the creation of many of her greatest palaces, churches, and paintings. Veronese's and Titian's paintings came at a time when Venice's cultural and economic influence was already on the wane. In order to establish an instrumental connection between Venice's glory and much of its art, then, we would be forced to deny Carpaccio,

Longhena, Bellini, and Palladio, among scores of others.

The *Zeitgeist* is not a ventriloquist, with architecture and other cultural artifacts as its dummies (this is a variation on British historian Eric Hobsbawm's idea that economic development is not a ventriloquist, with the rest of history as its dummy).¹¹ Even if contemporary architects could accurately intuit the *Zeitgeist* and convince it to speak through their buildings, would this be so wonderful? Designers in other disciplines are somewhat more sanguine about such temporal specificity. They seek timelessness and 'classical' continuity. Certain automobiles from the '30s—but not all—are deemed CLASSICS. The Citroen DS, first introduced in 1957, looks remarkably modern even today. The designer of the 1990s generation Mercedes Benz SL roadster was recently interviewed by the editors of an American automobile magazine. He described his new coachwork as not having "too much *Zeitgeist*" [sic], because with "too much *Zeitgeist*" the car would age too quickly. The Porsche 911 has passed the quarter century mark with only cosmetic changes, a fact that undoubtedly makes Dr. Porsche very happy. Even considering the short lifespan of today's buildings, annual aesthetic obsolescence might not be desirable for most architects or their clients.

Most architects have big egos. They want their imprimatur on the buildings they design. They want everyone to know who designed them. But the more their buildings represent their age, the less they are identifiable as the work of an individual artist. The works become anonymous. This was ardently desired by some of the more radical architects and theorists of the '20s and '30s, from

Hannes Meyer to Massimo Bontempelli. Today's architects and students most certainly do not want anonymity. The more their buildings share the *Zeitgeist*, the less the architects share the glory.

Thirty years ago Aldo Van Eyck lamented that architects had forgotten about those aspects of contemporary life which were essentially the same as they were decades and centuries ago. The contemporary avant-garde might do well to heed Van Eyck's remark. I recently heard a story about a student who could not allow himself to design a building with a courtyard because courtyards are an architectural configuration from the past. An astute critic asked the student if he was against drinking gin because gin was medieval, or against drinking champagne because champagne was Baroque.¹² What about buttons or shoelaces? Should we 'button' our shirts and 'tie' our shoes only with velcro? As if the student's courtyard would ever be mistaken for a medieval cloister or a Renaissance cortile; as if Alvar Aalto's courtyard at Saynatsalo would ever be confused with the monastery of Le Thoronet. I have more than once heard students claim that the geometric figure the octagon represents a pre-modern era. Yet octagons would exist even if humans didn't.

In the early 1930s a controversy erupted between two influential figures in Italian architecture, Marcello Piacentini, the most powerful Italian architect of his day, and Ugo Ojetti, the most influential art critic. The polemic was over whether Classical Roman arches and columns were required for an appropriate official Italian Imperial architecture. Ojetti said yes; Piacentini, taking an uncharacteristically modern stance, said no. After all, Piacentini argued,

"You wouldn't have us wear a toga, would you, Signor Ugo?" Ojetti replied, "Palladio didn't wear a toga." Mussolini got his arches and columns.

There is another, and rather comical, parallel to these attitudes within the Futurist movement, albeit late in the movement. In 1930, at a banquet to launch the *Futurist Cookbook*, Marinetti railed against the staple of the Italian diet: *pastasciutta*. "Futurist cooking," claimed Marinetti, "will be liberated from the ancient obsession of weight and volume, and one of its principal aims will be the abolition of *pastasciutta*. *Pastasciutta*, however grateful to the palate, is an obsolete food; it is heavy, brutalizing, and gross; its nutritive qualities are deceptive; it induces skepticism, sloth, and pessimism."¹³ Here we have Pasta, defying the *Zeitgeist*.

Courtyards, octagons, vertical windows, mouldings, etc., are among the myriad of architectural devices and forms which are allegedly inconsistent with a highly particularized—and doctrinaire—architects' view of the contemporary world. These proscriptions are corruptions of some of the more 'fundamental' Modern Movement beliefs concerning the appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular forms and formal relationships. The most common offender is symmetry. Why symmetry should have borne the brunt of the modernists' frontal attacks is easy to explain, and refers to the *charismatic*. Classicism required symmetry, therefore, modern architecture, in order to express the non-classical view, must deny symmetry. Contemporary symmetrical buildings are unnatural, improper, even deranged. How, then, can we account for the fact that the two types of structures most conspicuously emblematic of modern life—

skyscrapers and bridges—are almost always symmetrical? Further, they are symmetrical in two or more axes, and those which are not—like Michael Graves's *Humana Building* in Louisville—often represent a return to more traditional forms. Deconstructivists might also look to some of their own heroes from the early 20th century, like Antonio Sant'Elia, Ivan Leonidov, and the brothers Vesnin, architects who designed symmetrical buildings in the name of a technological avant-garde.

3. Like any Avant-Garde, Deconstructivism's successes have brought it closer to the mainstream, blunting its sharp edges (in some cases literally). To date we have seen precious few Deconstructivist buildings actually executed, but many of those we have seen, like Bernard Tschumi's *Parc de La Villette*, are follies; they are 'fun' constructions which don't require heated rooms and weather seals. And they are quite wonderful, to be sure. Other Deconstructivist buildings are rather small. Still other built-works are interiors; they do not have to shed rain or snow. (Is this starting to sound like the Modern Movement around 1930?) One of the larger public examples of the 'new architecture' which I have had seen is Rem Koolhaas's *Dance Theatre of the Netherlands* in the Hague. What surprised me about this building was how traditional it is in every respect except its exterior surfaces. The site plan completes a traditional square; the groundplan is a rather orthodox modern assembly, with cleanly flowing spaces; the interior is composed of standard modern spaces, halls, lobbies and auditoria. Like Venturi's idea of the 'decorated shed,' this 'ordinary' massing is overlaid with cladding, only this cladding is composed of zig-zags of metal and glass. Koolhaas has transformed an extremist and 'pure' version of a

charismatic idea into something more palatable and ideologically neutral. He seems to be playing Dudok to Peter Eisenman's (or Daniel Liebeskind's) *Van Doesburg*.¹⁴ One has the impression, however, that the cladding of Koolhaas's *Dance Theatre* could be easily removed for a renovation. If the building were renovated in Gropius's style of the 1950s, would that be an intolerable exercise in reactionary taste?

Deconstructivism has continued the Modern/Postmodern debate at the same scale and at the same level of discourse. And judging by the similarities of decorative excess, both POMO and DECON share a common ornamental point of origin. They differ merely in the source material of their applique. Despite all the talk of a technological *Zeitgeist*, they are both architectures in the scenographic, rather than the tectonic tradition, as Kenneth Frampton has shown. For Frampton, "...building remains essentially tectonic rather than scenographic in character, and, it may be argued, that it is an act of construction first, rather than a discourse predicated on surface, volume and plan,...."¹⁵ Modernism was primarily tectonic and eschewed the scenographic, at least in its original theoretical professions. Futurism was one of the few styles of modernism that was predicated on scenography, as well as *charisma*.

But the Neo-Futurists do share a few ideals with mainstream modernism. One is the idea that buildings should not be 'veneered.' Veneer hides the 'truth' of the construction process. But for most building tasks, in most climates, using most contemporary installations, covering the skeleton is as normal and as important as covering the frame of an automobile, an airplane or a motorcycle.

Projects in schools of architecture make Deconstructivism appear to be constructed with the most advanced technology; proponents argue that such technology is 'the way we build today.' Actually, at the level of detail these projects are presented, they would be extremely expensive, hand-made buildings, more like the Space Shuttle than the latest robot-built automobile. In reality, the way we build today is not all that different from 100 or 400 years ago, not to mention how the Romans built: strong, cheap and plentiful materials underneath. Durable, fancy and expensive materials on the outside. We build like the ancient Romans, only thinner, and with more plumbing. (Actually, compared to the Romans, with not even that much more plumbing.) But whatever the relationship may be between old and new construction methods and materials, the exigencies of the construction industry are not what has generated the forms of Deconstructivism, no more than it generated the forms of the original Futurism of Sant'Elia and Chiattonne.

If this talk is a plea for anything it is a plea for better balance among the *traditional*, the *rational*, and the *charismatic*. The antidote to the charismatic excesses of Deconstructivism is not Prince Charles's Romanticism, any more than de Stijl was the antidote to Eclectic Classicism, or POST-MODERNISM was the antidote to the 1960s concrete bunkers in oceans of parked cars. In the end, most of the stylistic bickering among architects is painfully parochial and trivial.

The difficulties and problems caused by modern architecture are urban, not stylistic. The Postmodern reaction to modernism should have been at the urban scale, not the scale of details and claddings. While some of the theory of the past 20 years has focused on

the urban scale, little of that theory has been put into practice; Postmodernism was an almost wholly stylistic movement. It is possible to make good cities using modern architecture, as the Amsterdam School proved back in the 1930s. If Dutch architects could plan and execute a modern city back then, one which continues to function beautifully in the face of the technological changes of the past 60 years, then we should be able to do it now.

There is good news, however, for those mainstream modernists, post-modernists or 'independents' who are put off by Neo-Futurism's lack of social agenda, its disdain for all varieties of tradition, its lack of order, its self-proclaimed absence of rationality, and especially its anti-urbanism. Like pure sodium when it's exposed to the air, pure charisma has a short life span before it literally burns up. Or else it combines with other elements (like sodium with chlorine) and it becomes something as innocuous as table salt, something that gives a little more flavor to an already established recipe.

Conclusion:

Much of my argument here is prompted by the fact that architects and critics in architecture schools are engaging in activities which take them away from the original object of their studies: the building and the urbanism which groups of buildings create. This is not to say that the influences on architecture and design that arise from other disciplines—be they history, anthropology, literary criticism, etc.—ought to be avoided. An enormous amount has been learned from these disciplines, and others, in the past quarter century, and I have myself engaged in research using both literary criticism and sociology.

At a recent internal symposium at Princeton University involving Professors of Architecture and Art History, a teacher of Art History asked the architecture faculty to define architecture. The first response by an architecture professor was, "Architecture is a system of representation." The historians response was, "I always thought of architecture as *Baukunst*: the Art of Building."¹⁶

Architecture is the art of building, however, *before* it is a system of representation. Were it *only* a system of representation we would not have to teach technical courses in professional programs; but, more important, we would not have to worry about the relationship of literal to allegorical modes of thinking; they would be manifest, or at least more transparent than they are, as in literature or painting. But the inability of architects and students to distinguish the literal from the allegorical has perhaps been the cause of much of the academic, *unreal* (in more than one sense of the word) design work of the past decade.

Worse, many architecture students today seem uninterested in any dialogue between the literal and the allegorical, between the "art of building" and a "system of communication." They desire pure communication, as if this actually occurs in any other discipline which can be regarded as a system of representation. This anxiety over the pedestrian and pragmatic essence of one's discipline is not solely the *deformation professionnelle* of the architect. Even writers share it. E.M. Forster once wrote about the novel: "Yes – oh dear yes – the novel tells a story.... That is the highest factor common to all novels, and I wish it was not so, that it could be something different—melody, or perception of the truth, not this low atavistic

form."¹⁷ But even literature has its 'pragmatic' side. The literal sense of a novel – the story – supports the allegory, interacts with the allegory, informs the allegory; and it is not simply the inadequate sustenance of an allegory that we could dispense with if only our audience were sophisticated enough to not require an understandable story to hold its atavistic attention.

In this regard let me briefly return to some research I did a few years ago on Giuseppe Terragni and his methodological inspiration, Dante Alighieri. Terragni, I believe, understood the difference between the 'art of building' and 'a system of representation,' and between the literal and allegorical senses of both Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the project he dedicated to that great poem and poet.

Terragni relied on his source, Dante, for a method of dissecting his own architectural allegory, and to explain the relation of the corporeal, literal 'sense' of his building to his allegory. Dante in his turn, using a long-lived and well-worn tradition of Medieval "Fourfold Exegesis" explained his *Divine Comedy* to his patron, in a famous letter called the "Epistle to Can Grande della Scala."¹⁸ What is central to both Dante's and Terragni's allegorical meaning, is that it is constructed upon the literal meaning. The building is a building *before* it is the embodiment of Dantesque compositional criteria or Fascist allegorical ideals.

Too many students, professors, and architects today do not understand this very simple necessity. My purpose here has been to show that nothing is new. This stuff is old hat, but is apologists are either trying to pull the wool over unsuspecting eyes, or have a very poor grasp of history themselves.

Endnotes

1. My thanks to Steven W. Hurr, Andrea Ponsi, Janet Zweig, and Patricia Sachs for criticisms and comments on this essay.
2. See M.Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York, The Free Press, 1947).
3. In the Princeton University *Student Course Guide* for 1992 the following entry is recorded for the Sophomore Studio: "Project #1: Design a religious experience for a smurf and a duck in two dimensions, with four colors, a baseball bat, and a sheet of aluminum foil. Draw a section of the experience and relate it to your interpretation of Senator Kennedy as a symbol of purity. Drawings should be at a scale of 1"=2 million feet." (p. 3). Observers not privy to the Princeton scene have been confused as to whether this is in fact tongue-in-cheek.
4. Evans, Robin, "Translations from Drawing to Building," London, *AA Files*, 12, Date?, p. 5.
5. Peter Collins, *Architectural Judgement*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971, 42.
6. Ibid.
7. F.T. Marinetti, "Futurist Manifesto," in *Le Figaro*, 20 February 1909, translation in J. Joll, *Three Intellectuals in Politics*, New York, Pantheon, 1960.
8. Joll, op. cit., p. 150.
9. Joll, op. cit., p. 147.
10. Grassi, G., "Avant Garde and Continuity," *Oppositions* 21, p. 26-27.
11. See Hobbsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, New York: Vintage Books, 62: "Economic development is not a sort of ventriloquist with the rest of history as its dummy."
12. The incident occurred at Cornell University. The critic was Colin Rowe.
13. Quoted in E. David, *Italian Food*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954, p. 93.
14. W.M. Dudok was an extremely talented and successful architect in Holland in the '20s and '30s, the designer of the Bijenkorf Department Store in Rotterdam and the Hilversum Town Hall, among numerous other fine works. He was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, one of two foreigners to receive that award in the pre-WWII period (the other was Sir Edwin Lutyens). In *Space, Time and Architecture*, Siegfried Giedion dismissed Dudok as 'sentimental.' It seems that Dudok used bricks and, sometimes, pitched roofs. He wasn't avant-garde enough for Giedion.
15. Frampton, K., Rappel "a L'Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic," in *AD, The New Architecture*, London: Academy Editions, 1990, p. 20.
16. Re-told to the author by Professor John Pinto.
17. Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*, New York, Harcourt Brace and World, 1927, 1955, paperback, ed., 1965, p. 25-26.
18. See Toynbee, Paget, *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, London, 1907.

Architecture of Liberative Movement:

A Design Thesis 1992-1993

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Movement is the creative poetry of liberty, emanating from the expression of inherent mobility; it is a manifestation of the graceful, vibrant tensions between equilibrium and imbalance, safety and risk, gravity and levity.

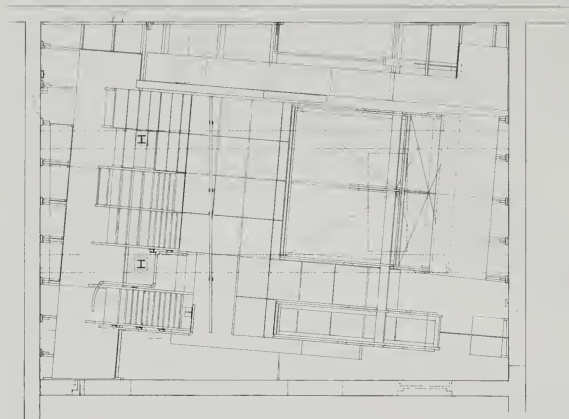
The Architecture of liberative movement is a thesis aimed at generating a built environment which engages that dynamic mobile nature of man—an environment which invites participation and investigation, challenges mental and physical abilities, and allows users to be interactive with architecture. Users of this architecture can then become participants. By endowing these participants with opportunities for choice, spontaneity, and creativity, architecture gains vital freedoms, becoming alive and liberative.

The need for such an architecture is definite and unmistakable when traced to the more inventive stages of human mobile life. As children we are explorers of an expanding world, probing the tactile environment and testing gravitational limits. Ingenuity defies convention. Precarious places are reached through remarkably resourceful sequences of physical effort. We are free to ascend vertical rock faces if we dare. This inventive clambering and grappling is part of play and discovery; it is a curious, sometimes ecstatic

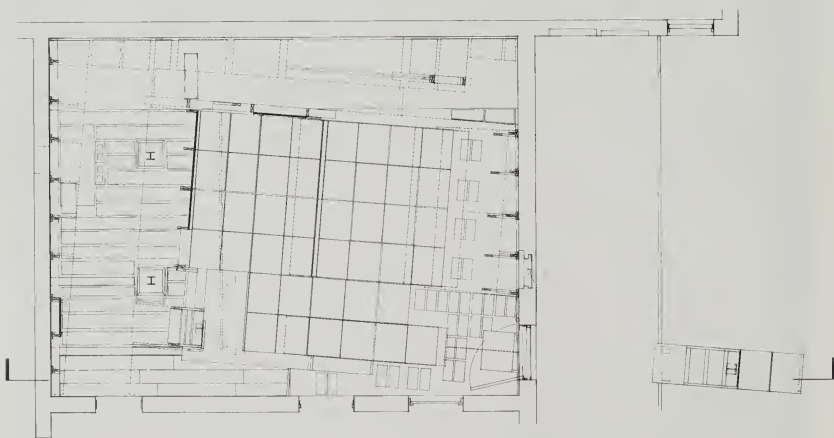
revery of our liberation from the immobility of infancy. However, we are then conditioned to avoid risk. We employ ever diminishing degrees of creativity in motion. With the passage of time, the memory of excited exploration grows faint, or submerges into amnesia. This progressive restraint and loss of motivation is analogous to atrophy, only here it pertains not only to strength and agility, but also to those creative sensibilities which might infuse built environments with activation.

Some rediscover what was known and natural in childhood through reviving movements and imaginations. This is exemplified by the diverse physical techniques and mental gymnastics required to solve the planar relief labyrinths of rock climbing. In the climb, an entirely different sense of balance, alien to the horizontal world, is engaged. The ascent allows one to become free, to be vertically intrepid, to vulnerably inhabit another terrain apart from conventional topography. Climbing has been compared to a tense vertical ballet. Sequence is critical to this dance, whose choreography is in part suggested by the features of the cliff formations and in part improvised and discovered by the climber. The challenges, choices, and creativity of rock climbing make it perhaps the strongest analogy for an

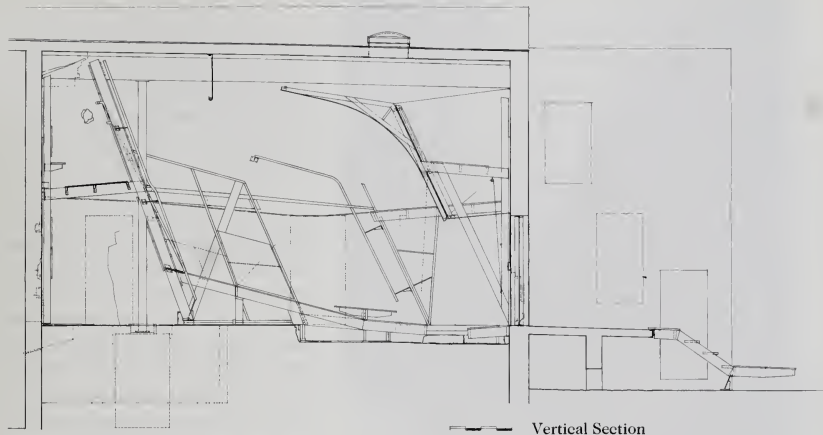




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architecture of movement because it is these qualities which imply participation with the environment. These mobile and tactile freedoms—the liberative essence of climbing—can be imparted to architecture.

Architecture, unfortunately, has done little to revive the creative interplay between man and the physical world. The majority of the built environment currently offers few opportunities for creative motion, instead maintaining level, predictable, pedantic circulatory patterns. The liberative movement advocated here is arguably counter to what is safe and buildable according to codified regulations presently in use. Although liberative possibilities certainly exist within the letter of the code, some precedents studied would not comply. This is largely due to the proliferation of ever tightening restrictions, which can be excessively limiting—and which should at times be subverted. Without ignoring the welfare of participants, it should be stated that vulnerability is the counterpart of

security. If one is to participate in a free arena of motion, both safety and risk should be available as choices to the mobile experimenter. For architecture to depart from its sedentary status quo does not imply the seeking of danger, thrills, or sensation. Rather, it suggests an architecture which re-engages the potentials of the body and the faculties of the mind in an extensive and integral way. It calls for involvement—not only of the legs and feet, but also the torso, arms, hands, and eyes—in an ongoing act of architecture.

The goals of a mobile, liberative architecture may thus be defined as creative movement, spontaneous movement, and freedom of movement, achieved through participation with architecture. For creative movement to occur there must be multiple choices or paths. These should offer variation in topography and difficulty, and should require exploration and creativity from participants. Because of this diversity, participants are freed to act spontaneously. They are granted



the liberty to improvise. Freedom of movement is the liberty of moving innovatively (as well as conventionally). It is the possibility of participating with space in three dimensions, both climbing and traversing at will.

Participation may be defined as interaction with architecture in either of two ways. The first is an interaction whereby the built environment is able to elicit physical responses from users—the building acts upon its occupants, and they “participate.” The second is a reversal of the first such that inhabitants act upon architecture to alter the physical environment, and as such, are able to participate in the ongoing generation of that architecture. It is these two modes of participation which can recall childhood’s probing and testing of the environment.



It is here that I return to the analogy of rock climbing as one of the most experimental of all movement activities. Climbing implies a range of creative motions which activate the entire body in participation, fluctuating among balance, strength, and sequencing skills. The language of movement that evolves from the activity of ascension, combined with the vocabulary of numerous architectural precedents (see bibliography), can be used to generate liberated architectural design. The sense of wonder found in exploratory environments can be regained, and the childhood freedom to experience them creatively can be recovered. Static, prescriptive architecture which rigidly determines modes of movement gives way to liberated, challenging environments. The result is an architecture of participation and vitality.

In exploring the liberative possibilities of movement there is an implicit critical approach to convention. There is a need to depart from lifeless and sedentary terrains which are almost inhumanely monotonous. But it should be realized here that the experience of any terrain is just that—an experience that should be tested experientially. Experiential testing can yield feedback otherwise unobtainable. Participants can raise questions and issues, and can be genuinely informed as they articulate their perceptions on the movement which they encounter. This rationale clearly directs the design investigation toward a method of full-scale experimentation. To conceive ideas on the activity of motion solely on paper, or through reduced-scale models, would be to suffer from the illusion that one can know the ascent of a cliff by viewing its face.

This full-scale testing began in the Fall of 1992, with the construction of an actual size “detail.” The one-to-one experiential character of the project became an asset in perceiving movements from a realized (not imagined or simulated) perspective. The piece is fully usable and deals with several phenomena.

A steep, ladder-like stair was chosen to embody key theoretical ideas, which involve the entire body in the activity of ascent. Drawing upon precedents of battlement stairs and ships’ ladders, its treads are alternating trapezoids, suggesting an energetic rhythm of climbing. The ladder can be used in multiple ways: It can be climbed using an ordinary rhythm; climbed more quickly and athletically; or descended by sliding down its right rail, somewhat like the descent down a ship’s ladder. Thus, it

offers choice and multiplicity while deviating from the typical ascent. For some participants it requires thought; for others, it is intuitive. The varied treads and risers comprise a continuous vertical terrain like that of a cliff face, only more accommodating and less strenuous. The phenomenon of irregularity is paired with phenomenon of stability, as embodied by periodic ledges in a rockscape. Broader treads provide for a stance at mid-climb and at the crest, while asymmetrical rails provide aid at the beginning and end of the journey. The ladder stair is constructed of light-gauge folded perforated steel, evocative of ideas of terrain and of lightweight “free” climbing. The stair also uses vertical displacements to represent energy, rhythm, and grace of movement. It thus begins to explore the psychological phenomena of invitations made by flotation and *decollage*.

The lessons of this piece as a full-scale design experiment lead to the pursuit of thesis work through further full-scale constructions, expanding the exploration to larger choreographies and sequences.

In selecting a site for experimentation, two types of potential may be considered. The first is its *direct potential*, in which a location geometrically, volumetrically, or otherwise suggests passage and movement. In this case, movement is inherent and awaits augmentation through architecture. A second, *indirect potential* exists in static, lifeless sites which are at first contradictory to the intended design activity. In being contrapuntal, such a site may offer, if not invite, the rigor of improbable transformational workings. It is a base void, a dead cavity awaiting an infusion of life.



The challenge of this second avenue was chosen in the form of a workable full-scale site. A construction/installation site within an existing building envelope was sought, requiring minimal footprint area, but favoring high volumetric spaces which permit movement in the third dimension. Such a

sions were considered expandable. The aging floorboards rest on top of four feet of cinder fill, which could be partially excavated to allow level changes and descent in the space. Although the space is devoid of fenestration, laterally closed except for an exterior door and three interior doors, the site suggests the possibility of opening the ceiling upward to the sky. This raw and ruinous space was a seemingly latent site, brooding with anticipation.

An experimental studio, or architect's atelier, was selected as a functional scenario for the investigation, stemming from the notion that experimental design work is generated in creative and interactive environments. The experimental studio can also serve to educate a public unfamiliar with the possibilities of such an active, participational realm. It should be noted here that participational, multivalent architecture has a tendency to resist functional typology and obvious pragmatics. Although the space may be designed with an aim toward a specific scenario (the studio), its nature (experimental) allows it to surpass any singular functional capability. The work is instead made and remade, according to the will and desire of the participants, in a process of being and becoming.

The aim was, thus, to make a radical but indeterminate intervention in the icehouse. Early models began to study a "building within a building" concept with sloped, hinging, transformable floor and wall topographies. The wall and floor became a continuous folded terrain, and a curving system of screens began to speak of the notion of the swing or radius of a folding hinge. The sloping wall became a stair, and as cladding of the wall eroded, shelves of the

space was graciously made available at 811 N. State Street, Champaign, Illinois, for the work of this thesis.

The site is a vacant, time-worn room in a brick and concrete icehouse dating to 1916. The space is a mere 700 square feet, but offers a ceiling which slopes from seventeen to eighteen feet, suggesting multi-level possibilities. Moreover, its vertical dimen-



reference library ambiguously became stairs. Wall and floor pieces also could be transformed to become work surfaces, and a mobile flat screen was allowed to descend into a vertical projection position from behind its arcing parent. The parallelogram-like geometry of the porous inner building was used to perspectively emphasize diagonal dimensions, creating the illusion that the completed space is larger than the original space of the site—a demonstrable contrast when juxtaposed with the unaltered (identical volume) workroom adjacent to the site. Layering added to this effect, through depth and indeterminacy of distance at the edge. Levitation and aeration of the architecture brought a sense of weightlessness, making psychological invitations to participate in an active place—a free zone.

With many elements of design not finalized, construction began in early February, 1993. The building process was also a design process during which numerous alterations occurred. Movement sequences were refined and expanded. Details and mechanisms were developed and tested. Idiosyncrasies of the existing structure were accounted for. All of these modifications were essential to the maturation of the work, and often were arrived at serendipitously. The greatest such case arose as a reaction to the structural failure of the aged concrete beams, which bore gaping cracks at their inboard ends, their thin steel tendons straining. Before the designed excavation or framing could begin, footings were placed, and two steel columns were retrofitted to insure the safety of the existing roof structure. In a sense, they intervened in the intervention, yet became an asset in many ways. Their assertion of and connection to the pre-existent order of the site created a powerful intersection with the

new construction, simultaneously emphasizing important pathways in the main wall. The balance of the construction process saw modifications to virtually every element of the design, from excavation and subfloor to the overhead screens and entry piece. The eroded configuration of the wall received



thorough study, as did the steel railings, which became increasingly three-dimensional and multivalent. The making process continually gathered speed, culminating in substantial completion on April 21, 1993, the date of the on-site final review.

...

The experimental studio truly is an arena of participation, both through interactions with kinetic elements of the architecture and

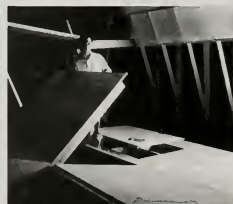


through one's own mobile reactions to its interior terrain. The choreography of this activated terrain is initiated outside, while still in the parking lot. Arrival begins with a hybrid ramp/stair climb to the loading dock; a foretaste of discoveries beyond the threshold. The ramp/stair is a fragment of the floorings to be found inside, and foretells the configuration of the floor-to-wall transition. Crossing the existing threshold,

one reaches a second threshold, defined by a virtual door overhead (a skeletal, unclad screen frame) and by a gap which one descends into or bridges over. This moment calls for either a jump or a downward step: a choice between travel to the highly active inner building or to the more sedate peripheral zones.

Once on the main floor, several transformable pieces are found. A wall panel and a floor panel fold outward and upward to symbiotically form an adjustable drafting station, whose seat might be a similar fold of the wall or floor. The manipulation of these pieces exposes shelves behind the wall/tabletop, allowing storage or ascent to upper levels. A lifted panel of floor becomes a conference table, where the legs of seated participants occupy the interstitial space between floor and subfloor. Hinging panels of floor give access to storage or flat files, or become theatrical trapdoors. In essence, the floor becomes an immense cabinet for the participant to discover, explore, and even inhabit.

Cloth screens overhead are an immense filter of natural light, diffusing the sky through the transformed space. The large flat projection screen is lowered by hand into the vertical projection position where it serves for presentation or theatrical events. The lowering of this piece requires exertion





at the hands, arms, and back, gradually easing at the end of actuation. When the flat screen is lowered it further defines the conference area and a gallery passage behind itself. With the screens in place, projection viewing can occur from many locations. In particular, the sloping floor allows participants to sit in groups, or to lay back on the incline; images may be projected on the vertical screen in front, or on the curved ceiling screen above. These screens can also serve theatrically for backdrops, or for shadow plays, or as a play of solar and atmospheric events. They are amazing to watch in a lightning storm.

The sloped floors, varying from four and one-half to fourteen and one-half degrees, are activators of muscles and sensitizers of balance. They call for response and adaptation, suspending notions of the level datum in favor of an awakened climb. After traversing and ascending this ramping floor, an ambiguous wall is reached. On the wall, the birch plywood cladding of the floor erodes progressively from frontal to rear mounted position, then into absentia. The revealed shelves become treads, and one questions whether the stair is a wall or the wall is a stair. One is able to move vertically,

laterally, and also through the wall. The wall becomes the site of numerous, unpredictable activities, including childhood games. A group of students had the impulse to chase one another on and around this structure, illustrating a recovery of spontaneous play. The steel rails further promote this improvisation, becoming not only vertical handholds, but also treads, footholds, and horizontal traverses. The rails step in at the mezzanine level, facilitating transitional movements. The right-hand rail then bends into the mezzanine, behind the wall. It becomes a curved backrest at the top of the stair, forming an elevated perch, which allows one to sense the elevation attained by the climb.

Rests such as this are a necessary counterpart to movement if authentic freedom is desired, and such choices of stillness are a stabilizing factor amidst vulnerability. Many points of rest can be improvised. The tread/shelves of the wall dissipate to broader intervals at higher elevation, creating niches large enough to be used as seats. The erosion of the wall creates a window from which one may securely lean out. Raised fragments of floor in the mezzanine create seats, encouraging reading, viewing, or conver-

sation. The subtle inclined cant of the floors allows the mezzanine itself to serve as a seating area (with the right-hand rail as footrest). In the case of the corner loft, left of the screens, the floor is low enough to invite participants to sit, legs dangling over, while still allowing passage beneath. All of these rests call one to stop and become a voyeur of events in the studio—in participating, one is also an audience. These many possibilities

A “diving board” (in a metaphorical sense linked to the “lifeguard chair” atop the stair) cantilevers from the mezzanine to the far corner of the space, oscillating with a sense of airiness. It floats, quivering and resonating under footfalls, just above the loft which is its destination. Although its pine plywood surface is smooth, its motion yields tactile feedback, imparting a vital sense of terrain. The crossing of the bridge begins with a



to rest as well as to move throughout the work defeat any sense of crowding, even at gatherings of fifty people. The architecture simply becomes activated as its multiplicity is invoked.

Various vertical passages exist, in addition to the stairs of the wall. Other vertical connections might be constructed within the framework because the floors “breathe,” floating away from the walls, and the unclad studs suggest an armature for future modifications. Likewise, holes in the existing masonry can become an improvised ladder for reaching the mezzanine. This is definitely among the more difficult movements, but it is an intimate connection to the rugged envelope, and is one of the least expected routes of ascent.

wooden rail (the structure which carries the plane) on the right, which drops away just as a steel rail is encountered on the left. The crossing may certainly be made entirely without the aid of rails. This is often the case, as travelers respond to the piece by jumping energetically to the corner loft. From the corner loft, still more vertical passage possibilities exist. They are sometimes less than obvious avenues, such as sliding down the steel rail, or climbing its brackets through the floor of the loft.

Several feet above that loft is another loft, a nest behind the screens. Access to the nest is a return to childhood, requiring one to clamber up and onto its floor, and only partially allowing an upright stance once in it. Low clearance of beams overhead rein-

forces the already present sense of altitude, making invitations to sit, crawl, or lie down; the space implies the assuming of mental and physical postures of rest. The nest is an elevated haven, cradled yet exposed, invisible yet commanding of views. It is a perch among cloth and branches where one can regenerate. After all the mobile activities of the studio, this is a still and contemplative place in the light—a place of repose.

practiced to its full potential, surpassing the limitations of functional and technical problem-solving approaches to design. Such approaches invariably result in little more than missed opportunities. In contrast, the experimental studio, by accounts of critics and visitors, verifies that a conceptual agenda can indeed be concretized, yielding experiential readings—both instinctual and intellectual. This is then a question of agenda.



In retrospect, it seems that a full-scale design study is an almost requisite method for investigating freedoms of movement. The experiential nature of the experiment allows decisions and learning to occur which would be otherwise impossible. The built work may be short lived, but the forceful implications of its transient happening have bearing on the nature of work to come—this is but the beginning of a synthesis.

The implications are both broad and specific. Some may seem obvious, others left to be inferred. As Thom Mayne stated, “This is a rather positive shock....This is an aggressive demonstration of a conceptual agenda.” This thesis attempts to manifest the poetics of movement. This is also an implicit illustration of the need for architecture to be taught and

Architecture of liberative movements posits the making of interactive places, as a catalyst of vitality in built environments. The conceptual design activity is approached phenomenologically, the intent being a tangible choreography of the adjectival qualities of mobile, participational events.

To achieve this implies a questioning of process and limitations. The experimental studio was the result of a conceptual process and a making process which were never considered to be separate activities or sequential phases. This made the process, as well as the result, immediate and participational. Many of the participational devices created sought to overcome the limitations of convention or type, leading to a multivalent ambiguity. The questioning of function and

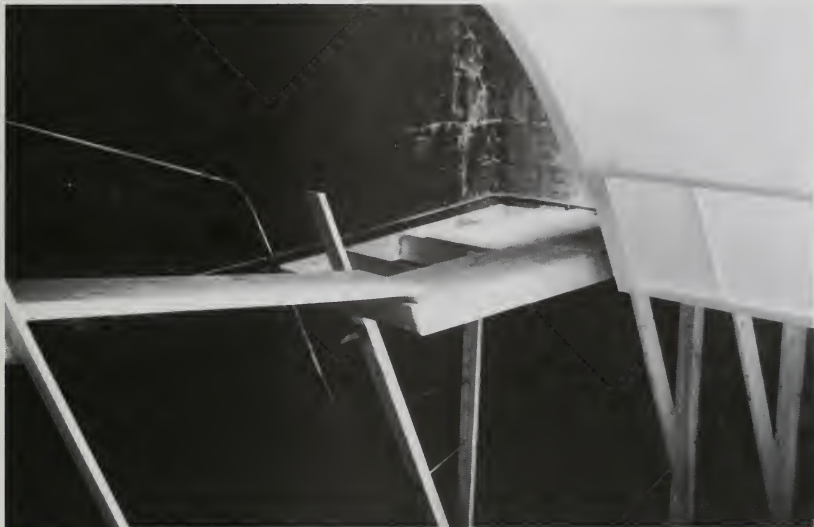


typology, as well as the subversion of their primacy, is not then a rash rebellion, but an opening of poetic possibilities. The questioning of codified limitations, and resistance to their constraint, has been previously discussed. The built work of the thesis was necessarily set free of such restrictions, thereby raising the issue of safety. On this subject, Herman Hertzberger, affirming the sensitized engagement of the body which occurs in such a free zone, said, "You should invite children here, and also the building officials—so the officials can see that the children do *not* fall."



In adopting such critically questioning yet pro-active stances, the architect takes on a highly political role—an act which itself interrogates current convention. Architecture of liberative movement, as a thesis, advocates a blurring of conventions and roles. The architect moves beyond typical capacity to become both a maker and a participant; while the client or user becomes a participant, with uncharacteristic involvement with and impact upon architecture. Through this expansion, the architect takes on the role of an educator whose work is a continual activity of straining to expand potentials of design while striving to open society to a more vital architecture.

It is my hope that in this built thesis the world of architectural education may be seen as integrated with that of professional practice. It has, to be sure, deeply affected both my teaching and my work. It is also my hope that the experimental studio, though now dismantled, has imparted some liberative life here. To me, it is a powerfully latent space, capable of intense energy or absolute silence.



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What's Behind The Wall

Why Progressive Public Memorials are Designed for Private Commemoration¹

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The study of memorials stems from an interest in the human need for remembrance. It is a natural reaction in all of us to immortalize our own accomplishments and memories in permanent form: photo albums, family Bibles, yearbooks, ticket stubs and love letters are tools by which we all act as historians, if only on a personal and modest scale. The necessity for a collective memory across a group of people is served by the erection of public memorials, which make our landscape itself a record of our common achievements, and a mirror of our values as Americans. Both the values embodied in monuments, and their physical expression, have changed dramatically in the last thirty years to reflect the diverse memories of our pluralist society. An obvious formal distinction can be drawn between early nineteenth-century, classically-inspired monuments of white marble, and late twentieth-century geometric compositions hewn from dark granite. However, the difference between the two is much more than cosmetic: aesthetic evolution in civic monuments was preceded by a change in the character of contemporary designers, patrons, and viewers.

The history of American monuments developed concurrently with that of the country itself.² Small scale folk crafts like quilts were a memory-inspiring comfort to

the first settlers. As the country grew in wealth and materials, people in the new nation copied the art forms and techniques of their European homelands, even when commemorating the patriots of the Revolutionary War. This trend corresponded to a reliance on European architectural styles for American homes and public buildings. For over one hundred years memorial design for the strong, courageous, male leaders of this country was predominated by the neo-classical and Beaux-Arts styles; American patriots were immortalized in forms once reserved for Roman emperors.

These commemorative sculpture pieces were large-scale reminders of greatness, glory, sacrifice, and leadership; the subjects of veneration were patriotic events and national heroes, usually holders of high political or military office. By the early decades of the nineteenth and through the beginning of the twentieth centuries, they were sculpted by artists who had studied the vocabulary of classical forms during a grand tour or study abroad, or who were at least familiar with the monuments of antiquity through published folios. Either means was an intellectual mark of distinction which the artist shared with his upper-class patrons. Although at times "Americanized"—for example, the substitution of corn cobs for the acanthus, or



Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.

the inscription of states' names in the frieze of the Lincoln Memorial—the classical imagery was probably best understood by those Americans who had enjoyed classical educations. While most nineteenth century Americans viewing a work like Baltimore's War of 1812 Monument would be impressed by its artistry, size, and materials, a minority would understand the greater significance of the column's form taking its precedent from ancient Rome's Column of Trajan.

Typically in this period, government bodies and wealthy individuals supported the construction of monuments. These patrons were of similar learning and economic backgrounds as their objects of veneration. In effect, through their financial support one segment of the American populace decided which memories were worthy of being kept,

and which cultural icons' contributions were deemed meritorious enough for eternal celebration. As a result, an under-represented segment of the country was without a voice not only in the writing of America's history books, but also in the tradition of monument-making. This group includes not only women, racial and religious minorities, but also rural inhabitants who composed the majority of the American population for decades, and had little contact with the great marble works being erected in the cities.

During the City Beautiful movement, a response by Beaux-Arts planners to the increasing concentration of people and building in growing cities, classically-inspired monuments in city parks, boulevards, and squares were a means by which the ever-increasingly urban lifestyle was beautified.



Washington Monument, Baltimore, MD

In this period and the following decades, three of the country's most prominent monuments were constructed or completed in the nation's capitol: the Washington (1885), Lincoln (1922) and Jefferson (1943) Memorials marked the great axes first envisioned by Pierre-Charles L'Enfant in his grandiose baroque plan of 1791. The great Beaux-Arts monuments are amplified versions of the common nineteenth-century neo-classical obelisk and column. Effigies of two past presidents are housed in their own temples, just as the great Greek gods were, making no small analogy for the prospering Republic.

With the World Wars passed the first great phase in American monument construction, during which millions of dollars were spent on large-scale, totally non-functional buildings—save the function of veneration.³ The waning of Beaux-Arts customs, especially in the construction of monuments, would



Washington Monument, Richmond, VA

see not just an end to this non-functionalism in civic building, but conversely, a turn towards functionalism in the act of commemoration, due to the Modernist disdain for classical traditions and a lack of funds resulting from the Depression and wartime. Where the desire to commemorate America's heroes was greater than the funding available for it, a more pragmatic type of commemoration was borne by bridges, highways, and sports arenas.

Since that time, and especially within the past three decades, monuments have again emerged as a prominent building type as the pace of their construction has increased. The new aesthetic which has appeared during the past generation draws from recent developments in sculpture and landscape design. The sixties and seventies ushered in a new appreciation for outdoor art, as modern sculpture pieces were positioned in plazas across the country. Artists rejected

conventional, realistic forms and worked at large scales and with architectural materials, making sculpture which engaged the viewer physically and defined space, rather than existing simply as an object for viewing. This "Plop Art" was the '70s counterpart to the earlier Beaux-Arts park decoration, although its only aim was to be site specific and aesthetically pleasing. Landscape design too became more architectural in a sense, the use of abstract built forms accentuating and framing an otherwise organic design. The growing alliance between professionals in architecture and landscape design which began with building and planning projects was applied to monument design. The blending of disciplines developed new kinds of monuments which engage the landscape and define processional spaces. This prevailing memorial aesthetic is more appropriate to contemporary needs for commemoration, although not as much in stylistic terms as in the manner by which events and people are remembered.

While this country has its very roots in a diverse mix of races, creeds, and interests, homogenous views were expressed by public memorial sponsorship until recently when the under-represented segments of the population organized themselves as patrons to support the commemoration of happenings and individuals outside of the mainstream. This trend reflects a curious kind of nostalgia and historical revisionism, which, in some cases, more than compensates for the discrimination of earlier decades. For example, Arlington National Cemetery is crowded with memorials to various individuals and groups who served in the military—mostly men. A recent competition for a memorial honoring the service of women in the military claimed the Beaux-Arts

McKim, Mead, and White hemicycle at the entry to Arlington National Cemetery as its site. On the one hand, it is impressive that this under-represented group will finally gain well-deserved recognition. On the other, one may well wonder if the siting of their monument at this prominent location may be misleading.⁴ In any event, this project is representative of the kinds of minorities finally receiving their due largely because of recent efforts towards inclusion and political correctness.

The past decade has seen a second crest in the history of American monuments as dozens of proposals were made in Washington D.C. alone, many of which seemed designed to be either a consciousness-raising effort or a catharsis to American denial. Painful events like Vietnam and the 1970 demonstrations at Kent State have been gaining overdue acknowledgement as smaller groups of citizens speak out on behalf of their own heroes, so that they may join the ranks of more typically venerated historical figures who enjoy more wide-spread recognition. The *patronage* of commemoration, typified in the nineteenth century by the elite building memorials of people from their own ranks, is no different; it is the *patrons themselves* who have changed, and therefore, the kind of hero and event commemorated. The sheer numbers of new patrons has also expanded greatly, as seen in the variety of monument projects which are proposed annually.

Just as classical traditions were not altogether replaced by the Modern movement, certain memorial customs are present today as well. Small-scale obelisks and statue groups guard city halls across the country; traditional heroic monuments featuring cannons and eagles have been erected since the 1940s to



Photo by Richard A. Armstrong

Astronauts' Memorial

honor veterans of the World Wars. These are still erected in courthouse squares for those who bask in the light of undisputed pride, such as veterans of the Gulf War. Formally speaking, these traditional monuments typically consist of an object of artistic focus, a symbol of the country's strength or the soldiers' valor, while the soldiers' names are placed on great tombstone-like plinths to the side or beneath the message-bearing emblem. The view is directed to the symbol of strength, courage, and valor.

This basic pattern can be seen even in one of the most visually innovative monuments of this decade. Although completed nearly fifty years after the close of World War II, the Astronauts Memorial at the Kennedy Space Center is very much in the tradition of great monuments like the Washington Memorial, although clad in a high-tech, ingeniously engineered pretense which obscures its conventional format.⁵ Selected in a competition of 1987, the design features a

black granite bill board-like screen, which is positioned on a mechanical armature engineered to continually track the path of the sun across the sky. Computer-operated dishes behind the screen reflect sunlight through the names engraved in the black stone of astronauts who have died on NASA voyages; lights in the dishes compensate for overcast days and nighttime.

Like the more traditional monuments positioned or focused on historic battlegrounds and harbors, recalling the place of sacrifice for those they honor, this monument continually mirrors the clouds and tracks the heavens where the astronauts perished. An inspiring, noble, and indisputably heroic monument, in high-tech attire it celebrates the men and women to whom it pays tribute as proudly as any marble obelisk. Like those traditional monuments, it dictates a message of valor which all viewers are expected to share. Appropriately, a runner-up in the com-

petition, which is displayed in the nearby visitors' center, is a resin obelisk with aerodynamic features recalling the silhouette of a space shuttle.

As visually impressive as it is, the Astronauts' Memorial is flawed in the same way as the more intricate of the neo-classical monuments are, in that the acknowledgment of the skill of the engineer/artist risks subordinating the recognition of the astronauts' achievements, goals, and sacrifice. Certainly, many viewers spend at least as much time admiring the construction and mechanics of the kinetic monument, all of which are exposed, as they do contemplating the lost lives further removing the commemoration from those who died. Critics have even suggested that the monument was meant to reestablish faith in the machine, which was crucial to NASA after the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger and as public and federal support for space missions diminished with the fading of the Cold War.⁶

Truly ambitious contemporary memorial designs are separated from their traditional precursors by more than just a new visual aesthetic. One of the prominent differences between progressive and traditional memorials is a shift from objects (as seen in both the Battle Monument and the Astronauts' Memorial) to 'experiential spaces.' Unlike sculpture pieces to look at and walk around, the more imaginative designs are more architectural in character and, at the same time, highly site-specific. Like the better examples of modern outdoor art, they embrace the landscape rather than sitting on it. Often sequences are a part of the memorializing process, as the project is designed to guide the visitor on a particular

path of discovery. These experiential spaces encourage touch, and a pause for reflection, allowing for personal interpretations.

This change from expressive element to space-defining form would not have occurred without a shift in the kinds of events and people being commemorated. Some contemporary heroes, such as veterans of particularly successful military endeavors, sports figures, and authors, are held in the same regard as their counterparts of several generations ago, and therefore often receive similar treatment in their memorials. Several contemporary conflicts demand a different approach due to the wider audience now participating as patrons and viewers who bring a greater variety of opinions to the commemorating process. This is especially true of those events which form the rather dark pages in American history.

Memorials constructed to honor Vietnam veterans are some of the most powerful, and most divergent of war monuments. When one considers the lack of enthusiasm which met the returning veterans, it is no surprise that few, if any, memorials were constructed to commemorate those soldiers' war in the years immediately following their return. Local and federal government agencies had no intention, or need, from their non-supportive constituencies, to erect monuments to this conflict. To deny its presence on the physical landscape would aid in abolishing it from the collective memory.

The period following the close of the Vietnam War was ripe for grass roots groups to claim their roles as patrons in monument-building efforts. The partial erosion of national pride due to this unsuccessful war effort, bolstered

by the increased political activism of the sixties and seventies, and increasing distrust of the government during and after Watergate, set the stage for individuals outside of the traditional power structure. They organized themselves to champion their own causes and heroes; to ensure that through built form the memory, good or bad, of this important turning point in American history, and the thousands of lives lost for it, would receive its fair share of the collective memory.

In 1971, the first memorial for Vietnam veterans was erected in New Mexico by parents of a killed soldier with the proceeds from his life insurance policy.⁷ In addition to erecting a monument for an unpopular war, the family introduced the idea of private sponsorship taking an active role in enlarging the scope of events which had previously been acceptable for public commemoration. What would become a massive movement to commemorate the Vietnam, Korean, and other neglected wars and events, began with this personal effort, free from traditional patrons.

News of the tribute in New Mexico reached Vietnam veteran Jan Scruggs, and inspired him to establish the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund for the sole purpose of erecting a national monument.⁸ The Fund sponsored a competition which attracted 1,421 entries; the jury selected university student Maya Lin's project of two black granite walls set deep into the earth at an obtuse angle. The memorial's only ornament was to be the list of the more than 58,000 dead or missing soldiers' names.

In this simple, striking gesture, Lin not only deleted all traditional military symbols and other patriotic elements, but also elevated infantrymen by making them the focus of the memorial, rather than its backdrop. By

neutralizing rank, race, creed, and gender, all who served in the war received equal treatment, listed chronologically in the order they died or were reported missing. Rather than glorifying a war effort, as earlier memorials did, the Wall honors the service of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country in Vietnam. No unfurled flags, galloping horses, gallant soldiers or soaring eagles, nor a single star or stripe grace its severe lines. Void of all imagery, the Wall was meant as a statement on the finality of the sacrifices made in Vietnam, portraying dutiful service and death as equalizers.

The black slabs set into the earth were a jolting proposition in a city filled with white sculptural pavilions and gilt equestrian statues; the now infamous controversy began long before the memorial's dedication in 1982. But the non-object, place-making quality of the memorial is its strength, and that which makes it important, appropriate, and ambitious. Not a symbolic entity for veneration, the Wall marks a deep, quiet crevice in the otherwise active Washington Mall. Maya Lin was the first in a series of designers to provide a place, rather than a symbol, for memory.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to just walk past it. Visitors slowly stroll along its length, leaving photographs, and flowers, reading letters, and constantly reaching out to touch the granite surface. It was designed to seek completion by visitors—physically, with the ubiquitous reflections of passers-by on the mirror-like surface and with flowers, photos, and other mementos, as well as emotionally. Rather than expressing an artist's or patron's opinion, the memorial collects all feelings of grief, anger, hostility, shame, pride, peace, and dignity. Its design enforces an uninter-

rupted procession during which one's concentration cannot be distracted from the symbol of sacrifice, loss, and service. The linear path demands one's attention, and the physical act of walking its length is just as important as reading the names. Facing these personal feelings is as much a part of the memorial as the person's reflection on the thousands of names it will pass over. In the midst of a great public monument, the personal process of commemoration is an integral part of the memorial itself: it embraces the visitors' varied reactions and the memories they conjure. Lin's design is considered to inspire such potent reactions that a visit to the Wall is a culmination of several counseling programs for Veterans.⁹ The Wall defines a place, and holds the time, for personal reflection and the memorializing process. It thereby seeks to heal the wound in the fabric of American history which was rended by Vietnam.

Once the National Monument proved successful and acceptable to the majority of visitors—Lin's Wall has become the most-visited monument in Washington D.C.—smaller-scaled initiatives to honor Vietnam veterans were made across the country.¹⁰ One of the most successful regional memorials built in honor of Vietnam, the Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1988), is as sensitive to its waterfront site as the Washington memorial is to the Mall. Removed from the commerce and tourism of Baltimore's Inner Harbor and poised on a slight hill in Middle Branch Park, the memorial overlooks the Patapasco River. Screened by shrubs, a ramping path leads visitors on a circuitous route around the insulated memorial before opening into the open field designed by architect Paul



Vietnam Vets Memorial, Baltimore, MD



Vietnam and Korean Memorial, Morris, IL

Sprierigen. Dedicatory blocks and an eternal flame bowl are flanked by the state and national flags at the head of the memorial, which is composed of a 100 foot ring of 64 low plinths. The bench-like segments support triangular blocks, which are inscribed with the names of the 1,046 dead and 38 missing soldiers from Maryland. Sixteen light posts, one for each year of the war which lasted from 1959-75, stand like sentries around the ring.

The memorial is shielded with thick evergreens from the adjacent busy street and hospital parking lot, but also provides views across the harbor and to the green of the

park. Visitors have a natural tendency to circumambulate about the gently peaked, grassy center; when they pause to sit on the bench-height segments, their gaze is directed toward the empty green. The absence of a physical marker at the center of this introverted, centralized space is an important aspect of the design. The architect described the memorial as “. . . an inward kind of place” with the outside world all but unseen. Many citizens’ groups lobbied to have a sculpture or flag placed at the center point, but Sprierigen was successful in his argument that the center must be left open and empty, because “that’s where the memories go.” The memorial is meant to adapt to visits by individuals and families, as well as group ceremonies. Like the national memorial before it, the Maryland Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial is not so much an object meant to identify allegorically with the war as a place for personal reflection and tribute. Void of “trivial symbolism,” according to the designer,¹¹ the memorial offers freedom for interpretation without overt political or military connotations.

Increasingly devoid of heroic and realistic figure sculpture, the abstract forms of contemporary memorials allow a broader interpretation of the artist’s intent, but also serve an important function in what could be termed a more culturally aware, if not more diverse, period in American history. The demand for inclusion, tolerance, acceptance, and political correctness is met in these monuments more readily than more traditional forms and symbols which incur problems associated with gender- or race-specifics. The importance of these issues is clearly illustrated by a number of altered monuments.

The great equalizing effect of Maya Lin’s Wall was aesthetically and ideologically compromised by concessions made by its patrons to critics who interpreted it as being anti-heroic; government meddling at the National Memorial prompted the designer to disassociate herself from the project. In an effort to alleviate the discontent the Senate approved a bill to add a traditional sculpture of troops to the design.¹² The bronze figure group of three male soldiers, which placed third in the original competition, is now positioned near the entry to the monument in such a way that it is not visible from the Wall itself. Ironically, this “solution” only exacerbated the controversy surrounding the memorial, and on two fronts. An outcry was heard from supporters of Lin’s original idea who criticized the imposition of bureaucracy on the artist’s work and questioned the rights of government to alter memorial designs without the artist’s consent. Women’s groups also joined the fray. While the soldiers in artist Frederick Hart’s sculpture represent a variety of racial types thereby including men of all races, the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Project argued that it ignores the service of the 10,000 women who served in Vietnam. In response, another Senate bill resolved to add yet another sculpture depicting nurses at the aid of a male soldier.¹³

A similar case of intervention to “correct” the original design of competition winners has been the subject of a recent law suit. The Korean War Memorial, under construction directly opposite from the Vietnam Memorial, raised further questions about proper memorial form and the creative rights of designers whose work is government-sponsored. The original competition of 1989

was won by an entry submitted by Penn State faculty members.¹⁴ The design features a large-scale landscape work in which lines of larger-than-life soldiers march along a 120-yard path toward an allegorical field of peace from one of discord. In the original design, the bronze figures were conceptual and meant to present a mood and define the visitor's path rather than present a taxological depiction of actual infantrymen. Once the design was accepted, a committee suggested that the figures be made realistic representations of the various ranks and races of soldiers who fought in Korea, which will detract from the original concept of the design as accepted by the jury.

Both of these examples illustrate the futility of including realistic representation—except, of course, in cases where a memorial is dedicated to one distinct person. They also argue the suitability of abstracted forms for contemporary memorials, since they avoid gender- and race-related conflicts, which is especially important in our increasingly anxious and sensitive society. Both the National Vietnam and Korean War memorials as first designed provided absolute inclusivity by avoidance of particulars. Unfortunately, the impact of bureaucracy has proven to inhibit the popular success and artistic integrity of these memorials.

The National Law Officers Memorial in Washington D.C., dedicated in 1991, succeeds in being both inclusive and inoffensive through allegory rather than abstraction. The site is a handsome urban park in Judiciary Square with two tree-lined, semi-elliptical “pathways of remembrance” bordered by low curving walls inscribed with the names of fallen officers of all ranks of federal, state, and local law enforcement

agencies. Sited at a metro stop, the memorial blends well with the activity passing through it and is still an effective place of congregation for gatherings or for individual visits. At the time of its dedication, 12,901 names of officers who had died in the line of duty since 1794 were engraved. A scriptural passage from Proverbs was the inspiration for the sculpture: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth but the righteous are as bold as a lion.” The



Kent State Memorial

figural pieces chosen by architect Davis Buckley cleverly avoid race, rank, and gender issues; sets of courageous and alert lions and lionesses guard their unaware cubs.

In addition to their comprehensive nature, abstract forms also allow public monuments dedicated to an event over which public opinion is divided to be interpreted by various points of view. This aim was accomplished at the National Vietnam Memorial, and also for a memorial at Kent State University. The student-National Guard confrontation of May 4, 1970, at Kent State has been described as an event with no clear antagonist or victim.



Photo by Jennifer S. Samelson

Abraham and Isaac, Princeton (Rejected Kent State Memorial)

Preceded by several days of rallies and violence following President Nixon's announcement of an "incursion" into Cambodia by U.S. troops, on May 4 the Ohio National Guard was summoned to police the campus. Tensions peaked as protesting students and the Guard converged on the campus commons; after refusing to leave the area, the students were tear-gassed. Following a brief period of confusion, the Guard opened fire into a crowd of students—some protesters, some spectators—killing four and wounding nine others. In subsequent court decisions, blame has been laid neither on the students for refusing to

disperse when commanded, nor on members of the National Guard for firing into a crowd when they had no orders to do so.

Without a clearly-defined group to condemn or celebrate, school officials were at a loss when pressured by students and families of the slain to permanently commemorate the happenings which have been memorialized by candle-lit vigils since 1970. Meanwhile, many residents of the town of Kent and university administrators—still bitter over what they saw as an event which tarnished their town's image and marked their administration as inept—wanted the incident to be forgotten, and certainly did not want to reinforce the memory of radical student activists. The urgency to erect a memorial peaked in 1977 when the construction of a gymnasium over part of the site of the protest and shootings was planned. This proposal prompted the formation of the May 4 Coalition, whose 200 members formed a tent city to halt construction. The student group organized to collect funds for a permanent memorial, while opinion was divided on the issue of its dedication.

Bending to the growing popular support, in 1978 the University commissioned a small memorial sculpture by George Segal. His offering, "In Memory of May 4, 1970: Abraham and Isaac," based on the Old Testament story, met with great hostility. The bronze piece portrays a bound youth kneeling before an adult holding a knife; which could be understood as parental sacrifice for an abstract cause, or as a metaphor for generational conflict.¹⁵ Although somewhat open to interpretation, the realistic pose and attitude clearly leave the youth at a severe disadvantage; the clenched fist holding a knife is a jolting

image of an authority figure. The sculpture was deemed too literal, powerful and violent, and was refused by Kent State administrators.¹⁶

In an attempt to avoid a painfully specific, controversy-attracting monument, the University launched a competition which insisted that every proposal be an "artistic incident" harmonious with the site, "neither heroic nor accusatory."¹⁷ The jury was in a difficult position to select a design which would appease the varying viewpoints; they favored projects which entirely avoided the violent imagery of the Segal sculpture. The memorial as built¹⁸ is a combination of plaza and landscape sculpture. Dedicated at the 1990 anniversary, and designed by Chicago architect Bruno Ast, the project is simply entitled the "May 4, 1970 Memorial." Avoiding commentary on any group's role in the tragedy, it simply honors the memory of the day.

Placed on the top of a hill, the memorial overlooks the commons where the protests began and the parking lot where the four students died. Measuring roughly 70 feet by 22 feet, the area is scaled to accommodate individuals and small groups, and be the focus for the annual vigils. Defined by orthogonal walls in two corners, the plaza is vaguely crescent-shaped and well-suited to the steep incline of the hillside, planted with daffodils numbering the death toll of the war. This area is separated from the adjacent sidewalk by two low granite walls. The walls and paving are alternately smooth and jagged to indicate abrupt interruption of normalcy.

Within the plaza, four circular paving stones lie in a line reminiscent of trajectory paths, continued by large monolithic blocks rising

from the earth. These simple forms and their arrangement in a non-axial line make vague references to bullets, grave stones and the number of slain students, but without a definite metaphor. The ambiguity allows for personal interpretations. The threshold which separates the main path from this plaza is inscribed with the words "Inquire, Learn, Reflect," in hopes of prompting individual commemoration. Designed to contain an experience, the memorial is politically neutral and non-committal. In the designer's desire to remain conceptual, none of the students' names appeared on the original design; there is no mention of the National Guard.¹⁹

Although its designer avoided symbolizing the grief, anger, and confusion of any of the several parties involved in the tragedy, the memorial provides a locus for the sharing of grief and loss. Its arrangement provides a space for contemplation and gathering of participants for the annual vigils. It is also an educational device, encouraging passers-by—especially today's Kent State students, most of whom were not yet born in 1970—to consider the past's conflicts and misunderstandings. Like the National Vietnam Memorial before it, the Kent memorial relies on the ambiguity of abstract forms to refrain from a didactic message; but it takes a step farther in avoiding particular commentary. Both memorials are silent, allowing for personal reflection, but the Kent memorial doesn't even include the loss of students as a part of the design. Engaging the landscape which twenty-five years ago erupted in confusion and tragedy, it is wholly concerned with the incident to which it is dedicated, and thereby includes all who were involved in it. Maya Lin's success in memorial design was exhibited again at one of the most poignant

memorials built in the last decade, dedicated to the struggle for civil rights on November 5, 1989. Representing a movement of remarkable conflict and courage, the memorial is located at a traditional hub of racial strife in Montgomery, Alabama, in front of the new Southern Poverty Law Center, which commissioned it.²⁰ Amidst this historically tense atmosphere and in the extreme Alabama heat, the Civil Rights Memorial stands, like its patron, as a cool oasis of hope and compassion.

The memorial consists of three main elements. Separating the elevated agency porch from the street level, a nine-foot tall, curving black granite retaining wall is inscribed with a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A stout cone set on its point is positioned off-center in the street-level plaza; its table-height top is inscribed with major events and names of men, women, and children who lost their lives in the struggle for civil rights. Each entry on the table is arranged in the attitude of hour markings on a clock face, as these individual sacrifices each indicate an important passing moment in the long history of the civil rights movement. The fact that the deaths of these non-violent, "ordinary" people are given the same emphasis as King's own assassination, which is the last "mark" on the dial, fulfills his prophesy of 1963 that "One day the South will recognize its real Heroes." The third design element is water, which is pumped up through the cone, bubbles from a hole on its surface, and sweeps down its sloping sides before splashing onto the concrete pavement. It washes over the inscribed names of the forty honored individuals, and references the forty days and nights of the Biblical flood. This metaphor is continued with the

inscription engraved on the curving black wall, from King's "I Have A Dream" speech, which reads, "...until justice rolls down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

The bubbling and splashing noises and promise of tactile coolness are appealing and enticing. The water encourages inspection of the memorial on this cramped urban site, where Lin was prohibited from making a sweeping gesture or experiential promenade for visitors to move along. Instead, it is the monument itself which is active. Even more than the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington which Lin designed with the intention of encouraging visitors' touch, this memorial invites physical interaction. In the glaring Alabama heat, the sight and sound of splashing water invites curiosity. The slow-moving water which bubbles onto the top of the table stands thick over the events and names and can be pushed, almost shaped, through touch before it slides over the edge of the table; on the curving wall one can trace King's words under a cool, sheer sheet of water.

The addition of a kinetic element to the composition also enhances the meaning of the monument. Not technically dedicated to the movement of the fifties and sixties, for which starting and ending events might be defined, and from which period the inscribed events have been chosen, the memorial commemorates the ongoing struggle for civil rights. Through the wording of King's quotation, "*until* justice rolls down like water," and the inclusion of active water itself, Lin emphasizes the idea that the struggle is still in progress; the passing of time is represented by the monument's moving element. The memorial is an

animated composition which invites interaction and encourages further thought on the progressive nature of the cause it commemorates. Lin's simple geometric forms, coupled with a kinetic element, commemorate not a leader, or specific martyrs, but a series of events within a long-lasting struggle.

which gave birth to events like the fight for civil rights, the Vietnam War, and Kent State are products of the changing cultural landscape in America which demands a new attitude toward the designs to memorialize these particularly twentieth-century occurrences from different points of view. Late twentieth century America, at least on



Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery, Alabama

The change in forms visible in memorial design is not as much the function of aesthetic considerations as it is the result of patron and audience motivations. The breakthrough design, Lin's National Vietnam Memorial, in its form as well as the way it was funded and brought into being, set a pattern for subsequent memorials dedicated to divisive events. The abstracted forms allow a variety of interpretations on the part of the viewer, and aid the artist in avoiding editorializing. The difficult decades and conflicting interests

its surface, as seen through its monumental building efforts, is coming to terms with superstition and prejudice.²¹

Contemporary designers who work with landscape features and in conceptual built form recognize that each of us responds differently to the dedicatory subjects represented, and by presenting a neutral judgment themselves, facilitate the visitor's free thought about the subject. Since old obelisks and new granite slabs alike will be

noticed and therefore take the initial step at commemoration, these progressive memorial designs offer not so much a new way to memorialize people and events but also encourage remembrance through a richer, more personal and active experience. By avoiding direct symbolism and realistic figures the memorials also avoid the complexities associated with our increasingly culturally aware society. This approach is especially appropriate today, when every faction is demanding to have its own objects of veneration indelibly marked on the public landscape.

The movement in contemporary monuments depends to a great degree on the interaction of the people who historically were outside of the ring of patrons and artists. To this new inclusion we owe the Vietnam memorials and the May 4, 1970 Memorial, and current proposals commemorating sacrificial groups which range from Black Revolutionary War Patriots to American Housewives.²² Contemporary memorials aspire to become a more accurate representation of our diverse values. A vital distinction between these and older monuments is that it is no longer bureaucratic agencies which determine the events and persons to be commemorated: the people who experience the conflicts most acutely make the decisions to choose which memories are to be represented. We—the patrons, financiers, audience, and historians of our own time—are called upon to fill in the gap between happening and history, between private memory and public commemoration.

Endnotes

1. Thanks are due to the Frank B. and Jennie Long Traveling Fellowship Committee who helped sponsor research on east coast memorials. Thanks are also due to Prof. Robert Ousterhout, for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. For another discussion of the historical development of memorials see Nicholas Capasso, "Constructing the Past: Contemporary Commemorative Sculpture," *Sculpture* (November/December 1990): pp. 56-63.
3. The City Beautiful movement as a whole featured functional projects of great civic value such as city halls, museums and theatres.
4. For details concerning the selection process in this competition see Douglas E. Gordon, "Military Woman's Memorial Winner Announced," *Architecture* (January 1990): 28, and Thomas Voner, "Two More D.C. Memorials," *Progressive Architecture* (August 1989): p. 22.
5. For further description of the Astronaut's Memorial see "Astronaut's Memorial," *Progressive Architecture* (January 1989): pp. 68-70.
6. Gavin Hogben, "Life in the Machine," *Progressive Architecture* (July 1991): p. 79.
7. For more on this early memorial in Angel Fire, New Mexico see Melissa Brown, "Memorials, not Monuments," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1985): pp. 43-46.
8. A competition for a suitable memorial was launched, open to all U.S. citizens over 18. The only two requirements specified were that the monument contain the names of all 58,175 Americans who died or were reported missing in action, and that the monument "be harmonious" with its proposed site between the Washington Monument's reflecting pool and the Lincoln Memorial. SOURCE
9. See Lisa Grunwald, "Facing the Wall," *Life* (November 1992): pp. 24-36.
10. Not surprisingly, many memorials to the Vietnam and Korean Wars have been designed in what must be considered "the Lin style," as much as the designer is chagrined to admit it. From the large-scale, urban memorial in Philadelphia to the modest slabs outside of the Grundy County Courthouse in Morris, Illinois, dozens, if not hundreds, of black granite plinths and walls inscribed with soldiers' names exhibit the cosmetic style, if lacking the substance, and seem to pay homage to the Washington memorial as much as to the war effort.
11. Interview with Paul Spriegen, July 1992.
12. The Bill passed in June of 1988 and also included provision for a 60 foot flag pole to be planted at the meeting of the walls. See Elena Marchese Moreno, "Senate Votes to Add Statue to Vietnam Memorial," *Architecture* (August 1988): p. 32; also Capasso, "Constructing the Past," pp. 56-63.
13. It should be noted that the names of the service women who died in Vietnam are included in the vast roll call inscribed on the Wall. For more on this proposal and its enactment see Elena Marchese Moreno, "Proposed Additions to Vietnam Memorial Spark Controversy," *Architecture* (May 1988): pp. 48-49.
14. Veronica Burns Lucas, Don Alvaro Leon, John Paul Lucas, and Eliza Pennypacker Oberholtzer.
15. William Robinson, "Commemorating the Past," *Inland Architecture* (July/August 1986): p. 4-8 or Stanley Mathews, "The Persistence of Memory and Kent State," *Inland Architect* (July/August 1990): p. 22 ff.
16. Segal's sculpture now stands on the campus of Princeton University. For more on the Kent State Memorial see Stanley Mathews, "The Persistence of Memory and Kent State," *Inland Architect* (July/August 1990): p. 22 ff and Melissa Brown, "Memorials, not Monuments," *Progressive Architecture*, (September 1985): pp. 43-46.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
18. The original first-place prize winner was disqualified due to a technicality in the rules (the head designer of the team entry was not an American); the project as built was a reduced version of _____place entry by Chicago architect Bruno Ast, who had to pare down his design when the fund raising efforts failed to meet the projected budget. SOURCE

19. Since the time of the memorial's dedication University administrators have added an unobtrusive plaque bearing the names of the dead and wounded near one of the ends of the plaza.
 20. Note. Historical Montgomery incident and the last building occupied by the agency, which habitually monitors the actions and movements of the KKK, was burned to the ground.
 21. Even the wrongs done to several seventeenth-century Massachusetts men and women have been righted as a memorial for the Salem Witch Trials Tercentenary was dedicated last year.
 22. Bulletin.
 23. BIBLIOGRAPHY
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Learning and Labor In Architecture: *A Pavilion for Virginia Park*

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Summer, 1994
Studio Participants:
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David Greenwell
Auro Salam
Robert Wilson

Research Assistant:
Leigh Jerrad

This summer session studio project involved the design, construction, and erection of a small pavilion in Virginia Park in East St. Louis, Illinois. The studio consisted of four fourth and fifth year architecture students, a research assistant and the author as studio critic. The pavilion that was ultimately constructed was the result of the whole studio's creative thinking. The pavilion was the first visible evidence of a comprehensive master plan for the dilapidated park, designed concurrently by members of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois.

The co-sponsors of this project were the East St. Louis Park District and the University of Illinois East St. Louis Action research Project, a consortium of faculty and students from the School of Architecture, Department of Landscape Architecture, and Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The aim of the Action Research Project is to unite the ideas and energies of the university design community in order to help identify and initiate improvements in the impoverished East St. Louis community.

The objectives of the studio were to:

- Develop teamwork as an essential component of the design process.
- Emphasize design as a social activity where the designer has a responsibility to the environment, to the people, and to the community in which the design activity is taking place.
- Sensitize the student to the phenomenon of architecture: space, light, materials, and their connections; how the material presence of a structure can relate to our emotions and to all of our senses; how these materials, when thoughtfully brought together, can express an important idea.
- Recognize that creativity can occur at all

phases of a design project, from conceptual design to construction.

- Explore the possibilities of whole-to-part design relationships into an actualized building project on a specific site.

A master plan for the placement, budget and scheduling of site improvements for Virginia Park was developed concurrently by Professor Gary Kessler and his Research Assistant, Mindy Cohen, both of the UIUC Department of Landscape Architecture. Their ideas, the result of earlier meetings with the East St. Louis Park District, were presented several times to the architecture studio at the beginning of the design process.



Out of these presentations, several master plan concepts were developed.

The entire design team then met with park district officials, city council members, and East St. Louis residents to discuss the master plan concepts. As a result of these discussions, four sites were identified as possible locations for pavilions.

The East St. Louis Park District established the following criteria for the pavilions:

- A total construction budget of \$2,500 was made available through a HUD Block Grant awarded to the Park District for this project.
- Any park structure needed to be designed to withstand punishment.
- Designs were to avoid the use of shingles because they have been used as frisbees.
- Any furnishings should be of heavy construction, or integrated into the structure; in the past, movable or chained picnic tables have been stolen.
- Metal should not be removable; any metal will be stripped off and re-sold.
- The Park District is open to a variety of formal and programmatic ideas.
- The park is heavily used on summer evenings and on weekends for the following activities: family picnics, church gatherings and softball games, basketball, children's play, and passive activities. The pavilion designs should address these activities, as well as proposing additional uses.

There are two methods (known to this author) for developing a design-build project in a studio setting.

The Yale Model:

A design competition is conducted in the studio. The winning solution is constructed.

The Bedanes Model:

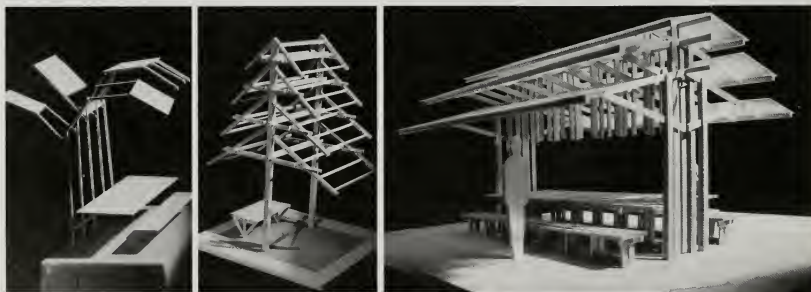
The studio members generate a series of design prototypes, periodically exchanging the prototypes, so that each solution is a result of the group's effort. (suggested to the author by Steve Bedanes of Jersey Devil Architects)

In order to emphasize the objective of teamwork, the cooperative Bedanes Model was followed. Each of the four students selected a different site to begin the design exploration. Each site proposal tested

The final design integrates a large table and benches seating up to 16 adults with a translucent canopy of corrugated fiberglass. The interlocking 2x4 structure combines delicacy with strength. The organic, tree inspired form nestles well into the tree filled site.

Design Development and Construction

Because of the short period of time available for development, construction and erection (three weeks), portions of the selected project—foundation, structure, and roof—were developed by individual team members. Meanwhile, the structure was critiqued by a professor of structural design. The construction sequencing and materials list were developed to insure that the project was within the budgetary guidelines.



program requirements, structural concepts, and site forces. After three days, the schemes were discussed, exchanged, and improved, and then discussed, exchanged, and improved again. After two weeks of this process, the projects were presented to the park district and residents of the Virginia Park neighborhood. The selected project was then ready for design development.

The pavilion components were shop fabricated by the students at the School of Architecture in order to take advantage of the studio workshop. The construction was supervised by Leigh Jerrad, Wood Shop Resource Assistant, who served as Research Assistant on this project. The truss configuration was laid out in masking tape on the floor, the pieces cut to size and

bolted together. This process was repeated for the columns and table components.

The components were then hauled to the site 170 miles away. Meanwhile, a backhoe dug the foundation for the pavilion. The following day, the components were unloaded, prepared, and assembled on site with the help of members of the Alternative Offenders



Work Support Program, supervised by the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department. This second work day was complete when the ready-mix truck anchored the pavilion firmly to its site. On the final day, the roof panels were attached to the structure.

Three days after construction was completed, the pavilion served as the center-piece for a large family reunion. With the success of this project, the East St. Louis Park District is enthusiastic about the continued involvement of the entire design team in developing the park's master plan, and in constructing specific features of that plan.



Projections

Kevin Hinders

University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

Architecture 371-374
Summer Studio 1994:

Ashley Black
Scott Flannagan
Chriss Frommell
Susan Haggis
Duk Kim
George Lapa
Jyh-Mei Lee
Kirsten Olson
Jeremy Paris
Stephanie Ritz
Dominador Ruiz
Janet Yuan

"The projection of images onto the courtyard screen of Temple Buell Hall has the potential to be very important in the spirit of the School of Architecture. School and campus wide communication of ideas, sharing of studio investigations, outdoor lectures and presentations are but a few of the possibilities. This project is rife with potential. The communication benefits of this element will be tremendous if the design and execution is carried out in an outstanding manner."

— an excerpt from the course syllabus

The creation of a full scale element to be placed in the Buell courtyard after the new building's completion allows for students to investigate a wide variety of form determinants. The concentration is on the design and construction of the projector/projection.

"The projection booth – this element is to enclose and protect a projector rack holding three carousel slide projectors. Requirements are relatively simple:

- 1) Copper and a related building system will be comprise the building materials.*
- 2) The projectors must be elevated + 6'-8" above adjacent grade to facilitate the movement of persons in front of the projectors without disturbing the projected image. Vertical circulation as necessary must be incorporated into the design.*
- 3) The projectors must be made safe from theft and the elements (including both moisture and overheating).*
- 4) Students will construct the edifice to be placed at a later date."*

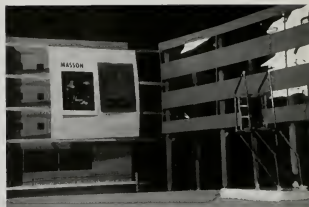
— excerpt from project description

Representatives from the Copper Development Association agreed to have the CDA provide both technical and monetary support. Perkins and Will and Associates and the University Campus Architect agreed to assist and review work produced.



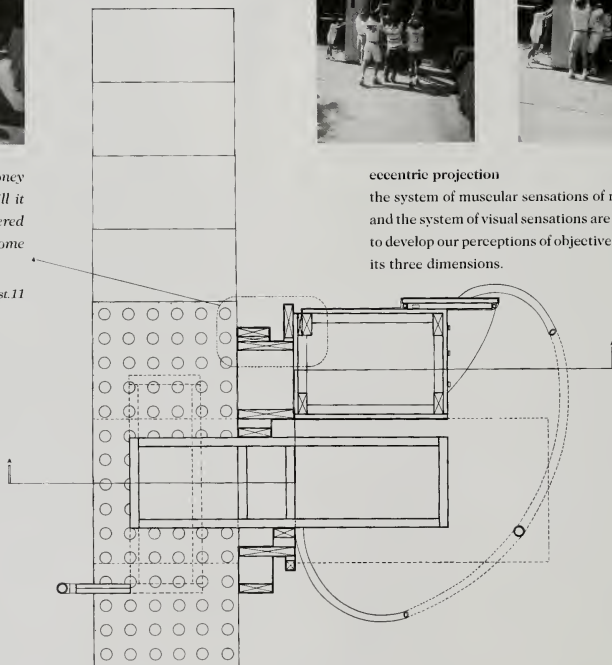
The process requires dialogue and growth through experimentation, exchange and discovery. Twelve individual investigations moved to three projects chosen by the students for design development. After development and review one project was selected for design and construction. A practical process as designers come to consensus.

The materials themselves are a major focus of the design investigation. Copper as a building material is examined, questioned and interpreted to inform the making of the object. The students work the material to understand its *properties* and its *potential*.



"He had rolled in money like pigs in mud, Till it seem'd to have entered into his blood By some occult projection."

Hood. Miss Kilmansegg st. 11



eccentric projection

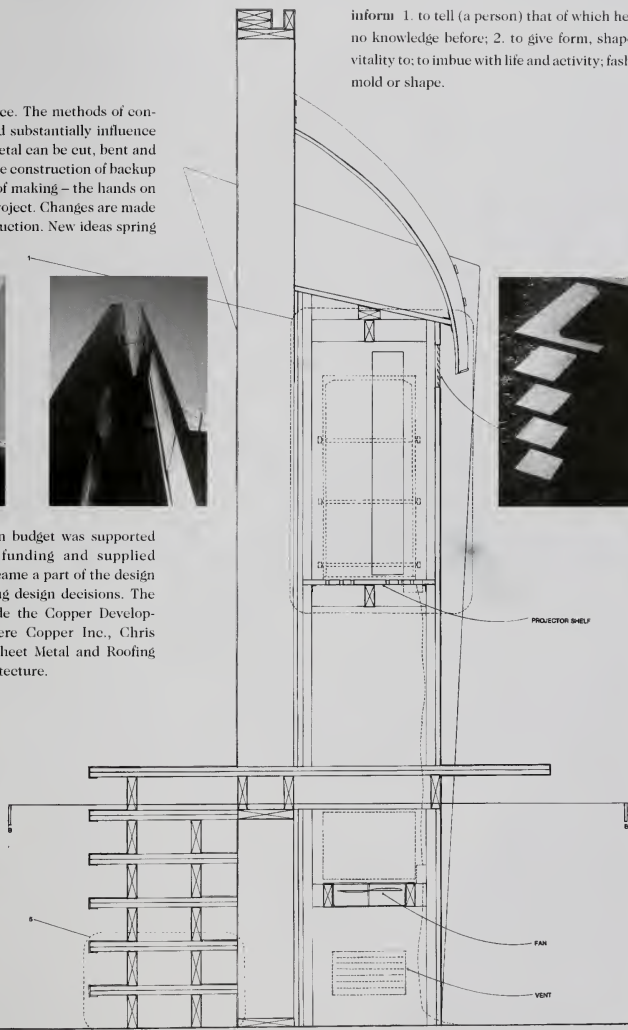
the system of muscular sensations of movement and the system of visual sensations are combined to develop our perceptions of objective space and its three dimensions.

Students build the edifice. The methods of construction and tools used substantially influence the manner in which metal can be cut, bent and connected along with the construction of backup systems. This process of making – the hands on process – informs the project. Changes are made to accommodate construction. New ideas spring from the act of making.



The studio investigation budget was supported with both monetary funding and supplied materials. Economy became a part of the design process, greatly affecting design decisions. The project sponsors include the Copper Development Association, Revere Copper Inc., Chris Industries, Advanced Sheet Metal and Roofing and the School of Architecture.

inform 1. to tell (a person) that of which he had no knowledge before; 2. to give form, shape, or vitality to; to imbue with life and activity; fashion, mold or shape.



The height of the projector—the image. The projection that this edifice could benefit the spirit of place. The height of the passerby versus the lamp and the carousel. The need for security. The School...How does it breathe?



Homonyms

The studio is indebted to Mr. Mike Cain and Advanced Sheet Metal and Roofing for their generous support through the use of their facilities.

insight 1. Power or faculty of immediate and acute perception or understanding; intellectual discernment; intuition whether that power is regarded as a general inner faculty, a special capacity for a particular field of view or the gift of mystical vision. 2. The perception of the inner nature of a thing; also the act of such inward apprehension. 3. Mental engrossment in regard to something. 4. An inspection; a scrutiny.

incite To rouse to a particular action; move to act by inducement or persuasion; urge onward; stir up; instigate; stimulate.

The soul in man is not a function.

Emerson, *Essays Over-Soul*



Reflections



Reflections 8

Semper and Two American Glass Houses
Robert Dell Vuyosevich

Post Partum: Wexner Fragments
Kay Bea Jones

In Search of a Critical Middle Ground
Brian Kelly

The Many Faces of Architecture, or, Universal Civilization, Linguistic Insights, and Architecture
Andrzej Pinno

Talking Takeyame: An Interview with Minoru Takeyama
Paul Armstrong and Jeffery Poss

Concept and Image: How Design Evolves
A Forum with Gunnar Birkerts, Joseph Escherick and Minoru Takeyama

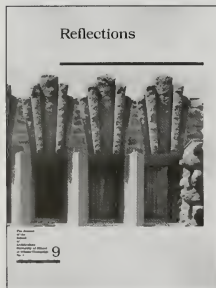
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